

AN APPROACH TO THE EVALUATION OF CHILDREN'S
NARRATIVE WRITING

by

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ABSTRACT

Research in the field of children's narrative writing is reviewed and the development of children as tellers and writers of stories is described within a framework which encompasses fantasy play, drawing and social role-taking abilities. An empirical study is reported which was carried out in one London junior school. Stories written by 113 children who were between $7\frac{1}{2}$ and $11\frac{1}{2}$ years of age were evaluated by focusing on specific attributes of the characters in narratives. Stories were scored for characteristics of the self or hero/heroine, attributes of other characters, details of social and physical environment and the sense of awareness of the reader's needs. The results provided evidence of age-related increases in the numbers of references to internal psychological states which children make in their stories. The narratives were also analysed for structure, and developmental trends in the complexity of the structures which children use were observed. Each child was interviewed in order to elicit his/her concept of story. It is suggested that the analysis provides a useful method for evaluating the development of children's imaginative writing. The method is quantifiable and it also retains the quality of meaning which the child is trying to express, and gives insights into the growing capacity of children to understand the psychological characteristics of people in their social world and to structure happenings in a coherent way.

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CHAPTER 1THE VALUE OF THE IMAGINATION
Introduction

"Artistic activity is not simply a luxury available to the leisured classes but is a fundamental aspect of the human repertoire. Indeed, the production of art is not abandoned even in situations in which the greater part of a person's energy must be expended in the sheer struggle for survival, as the art of concentration camp inmates startlingly testifies." (Winner, 1982, pp 1-2)

Imaginative activity is a universal phenomenon yet one which has proved extremely difficult for the psychologist to study. The issues raised are complex. Why do people engage in creative behaviour when it has no obvious practical outcome ? Why are we moved when we respond to literature ? Why do children engage in fantasy play ? What motivates young people to write and act out stories ? What has actually happened when a child produces a piece of creative writing ? Are there patterns of development which a child goes through in his creative work ? Could the psychologist gain deeper understanding of a child's emotional and, indeed, cognitive development through the study of creative products ? What are the conditions in which creativity may best flourish ?

When one is searching for answers to these and many other questions of a similar kind, it is logical to turn to the huge literature on the subject of the psychology of creativity. A number of reasons are commonly given for the relatively recent upsurge of interest by psychologists in this aspect of human endeavour. It is often argued, particularly in the American studies, that the rapidly changing society of to-day has a need for innovation and

discovery in the fields of science and technology; these very advances have themselves resulted in increased leisure time and, indirectly, in a need for creative activities as one means to individual fulfilment. In addition, within the changing climate of educational theory there is a growing feeling that psychologists should be able to assess and evaluate a much wider range of abilities than those measured by traditional intelligence tests. A major difficulty is that, as with concepts which are used in a common-sense way, the term 'creativity' is a loose one and, while most studies begin with a definition, there is no unanimity in the scope of definitions adopted. Creativity may be defined in terms of the end product of the process, or in the act of creation itself. If it is defined in terms of the product - the poem or the scientific discovery - we still require some criterion against which to judge it. If we concentrate on the process, then we come up against a host of concepts which are just as difficult to define as creativity - for example, 'inspiration', 'moment of truth', 'incubation period', 'flash of insight'. In fact, some psychologists opt out of the controversy by adopting the operational definition that creativity is what is measured by tests of creativity, but this approach too can lead to circular arguments as researchers attempt to define what is a test of creativity.

This thesis focusses on one aspect of ^{the} process - the ability of children to create narratives. So, rather than attempt a global analysis of creativity (if such a thing is possible), I concentrate on research into story

writing. This narrows the field to some extent but the literature, nevertheless, is large, and, spanning as it does the disciplines of psychology and English, can appear formidable since each discipline has its own distinct type of approach. I will consider both approaches in this chapter.

If we focus first on the studies which psychologists have made of creative writing we can distinguish two broad categories:

1. Writers themselves, their personality, family history, the cognitive and emotional processes which are involved in the creation of imaginative writing.
2. The end product, criteria used to judge it, the emotions which are expressed in it, the complexity of the structure of a piece of writing, the analysis of the language which is used.

This type of approach lends itself to quantitative analysis although the use of qualitative data is not ruled out. Literary people, by contrast, tend not to be concerned with measurement in the narrow sense but they also emphasise psychological aspects of the creative process. Some case studies of creative writers at work will be explored in Chapter 3, but for the moment two examples are presented. The critic Burnshaw (1970) describes the creative process as 'a sequence of gathering, widening, deepening, self-resolving, self-discovering' and explains the relationship between reader and literature in this way: 'The poem's presences form the characters for re-enactment within the reader - the poem

itself remains identical but in the reader it relives in innumerably varied experiences." Tolkien (1964) writes about the worlds of reality and the imagination as follows:

"Fantasy is a natural human activity. It certainly does not destroy or even insult Reason; and it does not either blunt the appetite for, nor obscure the perception of, scientific verity. On the contrary. The keener and clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make".

Tolkien, 1964, p50

To Tolkien, the enjoyment of fairy tales does not depend on whether they could happen in real life. Rather he argues that the pleasure which we feel when we experience a convincing product of the imagination can be explained as a perception of its underlying reality or truth. So he justifies the use of fantasy as a means of deepening understanding of ourselves, our relationships with others and the world which we inhabit.

Both Burnshaw and Tolkien make statements which they go on to confirm through selected case studies, examples and personal experiences. Their arguments sound convincing and are acceptable to the literary reader but would not be considered as having been convincingly or objectively demonstrated by the more rigorous psychologists trained in experimental methods.

Throughout the thesis I have attempted to make links between researchers who adopt the perspective of the English specialist and those who approach the subject as psychologists. I am convinced that if one keeps an open and flexible mind then the two strands can be successfully woven together, despite the tension between them.

What distinguishes psychologists' studies of creative processes is not the questions asked but the way in which the questions are answered. Whereas the arguments of English specialists and literary people are based on introspection and logical analyses, psychologists found their answers on an empirical, sometimes experimental base. The danger is that the richness of the data is lost in the quest for scientific rigour. However, sensitivity and rigour are not necessarily incompatible qualities as Winner (1982), an experimental psychologist, shows in her study of the arts ; Arnheim introduces her book by writing:

"Winner keeps the bird in flight but goes after its shadow which, when cast upon the ground, is reachable, measurable, two dimensional. And as she applies her tools, she glances mindfully and gratefully at that high apparition to which we owe it all."
(ibid p v).

Whether I have succeeded in both 'keeping the bird in flight' and maintaining the standards required of a psychologist is for the reader to judge. In this thesis, the developmental trends which appear in children's narrative writing are examined, with particular emphasis on the growth of social, emotional and cognitive awareness in the young writers. I begin by looking at extracts from stories written by children of different ages. (I am indebted to the teachers and children of SS Mary and Peter School, Teddington and Ibstock Place School, Roehampton for allowing me to use these pieces of writing).

Examples of children's writing

Typically the narratives of seven-year-olds are straightforward chains of events which contain very little expression of emotion. At this age, children focus on simple, physical traits in their characters; what happens is more important than why it happens, and they usually omit useful descriptive information which would help the reader understand the context within which the story takes place. For example, Lisa at seven writes:

"One day there was a witch and a little girl and one day a witch came at her house and took her away but in the nit she wook up and put her witch in the fier".

Despite the horrific nature of the events in this story, the characters express no emotion and the author gives little direct insight into the motives for their actions. There is no indication that Lisa has been able to identify with the witch or the little girl and she seems to assume that the reader shares her perspective of the happenings in the story. Lisa's narrative appears egocentric yet even at this age the use of dialogue can enable the child to enter more fully into the experiences of all the characters and, at the same time, develop a greater sense of reader-awareness. Here Catherine discovers that a conversation can enhance the effectiveness of a atory as she shows how a sapling, newly planted in the farmer's field, gets to know an established tree:

"....Leo turned round and said to the other tree
whats your name my name is mini whats your name said
mini my name is Leo I licke your name Leo I licke
yours mini Thank you Leo How old are you Leo three
years old do you licke thise farm Mini yes I licke
this farm very much I licke this farm as well said
Leo....."

When children read aloud this kind of story, they will often role-play the characters by giving each a distinct voice with the result that the piece 'comes alive' for both author and audience. There is some similarity to earlier socio-dramatic play and a growing sensitivity to the feelings of the various characters can be seen. Ashley, aged seven, shows his understanding of the increased vividness which dialogue gives to both reader and writer when he says to his teacher, 'I like dramatic stories. If you put people saying things its much better. I find it's changed my stories. I started last year. It's more dramatic and exciting. Most people 'don't care and just do the story, just put things in, but if people say things it sounds dramatic...'

By nine or ten, children are beginning to show more empathy for others in their writing. Here Julian describes the feelings and intentions of a young Viking:

"The boat was rocked from side to side and most of the men were thrown into the sea but the strongest of them all was Asbjorn. He was a ten-year-old boy. He stood still as a statue on the deck. And when the last person was knocked overboard he blushed. After five weeks later Asbjorn¹ saw land in sight. The next week he landed. There was a little humming noise in the distance - voices he thought. And the sound of ebony drums only one of me and thousands of that village. I do not know how to fight a whole village. Aha! I will creep in at night when they are all asleep and steal all their jewels and money and food....."

Julian gives enough information about Asbjorn's state of mind for us to enter to some extent into the experience; in addition, he describes the setting in such a way that it is possible to visualise the scenes on board ship and in the strange country. The reader can see how he interweaves a

growing understanding of people with a wider knowledge of the world. In a similar way, ten-year-old Daniel shows distinct awareness of the self-image of his hero, Ronald Biggs, and gives some impressions of the fluctuating emotions which an individual can experience:

"I was thirty-seven and I was deforced. I can't stand it any longer I said to myself one day and I disided to be a birglar. I was a birglar for three years and I became very wealthy but I steel wasn't satisfied. I disided to get into the bigger bussness and became a train robber..... "

It is interesting to note that in both these extracts the hero is involved in an internal dialogue with himself as he plans what to do next. Although the story still consists of a chain of events recounted in strict chronological order, the time span is extended and the characters have their adventures in more elaborate and detailed contexts. In addition, there is far more psychological information about the reasons which underly the action than is normally found in the writing of younger children.

By the time of early adolescence, writers have a more heightened self-awareness and responsiveness to the feelings of others. They may even go beyond the literal to the metaphorical use of language, as Sian's account of a midnight encounter in a garden shows. Skilfully, she creates a mysterious atmosphere in the story through her description of moonlight and the ghostly shape of the statue. She uses a mature literary device - the rhetorical 'Where was John?' - in the third paragraph to indicate the heroine's thoughts at the moment. Her dialogue suggests the passage of time in a sophisticated manner and the relationship between fantasy and reality is

subtly handled. She acknowledges the surface source of the story - a television serial which 'worked into her mind' - but realises after writing it its deeper implications for herself as an adolescent girl. She says of writing that 'you can switch off from the world and pretend you are one of the characters' and identifies themes of loneliness and longing which pre-occupy her at the moment:

"That night after my mother had left me I set my alarm for twelve o'clock. I didn't have any problem in going to sleep that night, I thought it would be lovely to see my friend John in our own secret moonlit garden just before I dozed off I put my alarm clock under my pillow and went to sleep. At twelve o'clock my alarm woke me. I had to creep very quietly past my mother's room and down the stairs. I opened the bathroom window, jumped out of it and down the path which led up to mine and John's moonlit garden. The next moment I was walking through a dream garden. Where was John? When I was walking through the moonlight the moon shone on a figure that looked like a boy's figure a figure rather like John's. I started to walk very slowly across the grass to where the person sat on the moonlit grass as I walked I whispered. 'John is that you?' no answer followed so I whispered 'John please answer if you don't I will go back to bed. I knew that if I said that John really would answer if I said that. I still kept walking at last I reached the figure then John said 'Sarah you really are an ass of course its your old pal John'. 'Let's go for our walk in the garden while we can'. So we went for a walk around our garden at the end John said 'Right meet you here this time tomorrow night'. 'Okay' I said and went up the stairs to bed. I was woken by my mother saying 'its time to get up' I thought about last night the same question came into my mind was it a dream or not? I cannot explain as John was a statue which came alive with the moon. So I decided to think of it as a dream, then I remembered that I put a flower under my pillow which I picked last night. It was still there!"

The mystery remains unresolved but a group of girls from her class find no difficulty in identifying with the heroine and her relationship with the dream-like statue.

At fourteen Velma, a pupil at a school for visually impaired children, moves beyond a concern with herself to a deeper consideration of the effect of time's passing on the human condition.

TIME

"Time changing, rearranging:
Time like the syndrome of my mind
Fled fast through the valley
of a sombre past.
Time that I could not see was there
Walked my path, entwined my hair -
Shadowed surveillance.

Time meandered my every breath,
Showed no shame,
Would not rest.
Time stood in my shoes,
And I was seen,
The little girl I once had been.
Time told revealing lies:
Crippled beauty, blurred my eyes.
He has no limits to his greed,
Fulfills his task, willingly leads.
Changes bud to its flower:
With alluring fingers
Promised me power.

Time marches through the ages of man,
And all creation bows to his will.
Time imperious, instrumental -
Man stops.
Kings try to escape him,
They cannot, and I cannot. "

This poem, by an unusually accomplished writer, shows how effectively the use of images can capture Velma's thoughts about life and death. She seems to be standing back like a spectator, not only looking at the changes which have happened to her as Time 'crippled beauty, blurred my eyes' but also mourning the fact that life for us all has to end.

What all the pieces seem to indicate is a growth with age in perceptiveness, empathy and self-awareness. It could, of course, be argued that these changes result solely from the development of the writers' own social cognition and from the

adjustments which in any case they must make to their widening range of social experiences in real life, but the issue remains controversial. Some educators would argue that the writings represent not only reflections of existing developmental trends but are a part of an active construction of reality by the young writers themselves. It has even been argued that spiritual, religious and other deeply personal experiences can only be expressed in an imaginative form. Langer (1951), for example, says that thinking in images helps us to see patterns and structures in events, and that symbolic forms reveal 'the rationality of feelings, the rhythm and pattern of their rise and decline and inter-twining in our minds'. Velma herself understands this point of view intuitively when she says that for her the only way of formulating her thoughts and feelings about abstract issues like the purpose of existence is through her imaginative writing. A younger child, Denise, describes how, at the age of ten she wrote a piece when her mouse died because it helped her to understand'

In fact, I have found that talking to children of different ages about the sources of their ideas for stories gives interesting insights into their thinking processes, so before examining theoretical approaches to the interpretation and evaluation of imaginative writing, I would like to give some examples of ways in which children themselves perceive it.

Children's views on imaginative writing

"I like making things up. At home I dream about this fantastic world. It doesn't have to be real. I can make it up, like when you have a magic pencil and whatever you want you take from the air"

Joanna, aged eleven, discusses her story about the flight of a family of squirrels from a forest fire. The squirrels lose all their possessions in the fire and find refuge in a

new wood where they are welcomed by a community of moles. It ends: 'Their misfortune and their bravery had been rewarded by wonderful people. Who could want more?'

The story is a fantasy about animals yet the situation and the characterisations are based on real-life observation. The story is not as remote from Joanna's experience as a first reading might suggest, and, in fact, when asked about the sources of her ideas she says: 'I thought about it and I had been reading a book about animals going away from a forest fire and when I was writing the story my Mum and Dad were looking at new homes. At one time we were getting ready to go and we looked one more time and then Mummy changed her mind' She admits that she was extremely anxious about the thought of leaving her familiar home environment, so it was reassuring to experience the move through an animal adventure.

Mark, aged eleven, makes a similar point when he describes writing about an imaginary pilot, Joe Smith, who designs his own plane, test-flies it and crashes to his death.

Mark: Say you're writing about yourself, you're playing the part of someone in it; you end it as most factual stories would end. Not many people fly aeroplanes on their first go. Mostly something breaks and they get killed. You're not in favour with yourself, more with the story. You don't care what happens to yourself. You pretend it's someone else.

Really you are them.

H.C.: You are Joe Smith ?

Mark: Yes, you are the Joe Smith and writing a diary of how you built an aeroplane and won a medal for it. In some stories, say there was a man called Joe Smith and it crashed you run a commentary of your life in someone else's life.

Mark bases most of his stories on real events in his own life or on information which he has read in books. He admires authors who research the subject before they write and who create authentic characters and contexts. Of his favourite novelist, Willard Price, he says, 'In Volcano Adventure he's actually been into a volcano climbed down into it. It's like a diary. He's done many of the things he's written about. He's been to New Guinea and he finds out what it's like. It's realistic. You feel as if you're one of the people in the book. It makes you feel that you're walking through the jungle and capturing all these animals'. Through his reading and writing of stories, it seems that Mark is able to enter into the experience of another person and even take on the role of the other. As he himself says of imagination, 'Its like scanners in my head, a memory bank. I sort out the photographs in my head, take out the right one and take negatives off it of ideas. You select the right thing you want and feed it through the computer'.

Michelle, who is rather small for an eleven-year-old, explains why she wrote her story about a girl who shrinks when she drinks a magic liquid:

"I like writing about myself because usually when I want to talk about myself when small no-one wants to listen so I put it in my stories ... I like people to feel that happened the way I remembered things, to let people know and share my memories and feelings. It depends on what I'm feeling. If I'm feeling I want to explain something that's happened, I try to put it into my stories. I try to put as much memories as I can When I write stories I try and be like I was and try to remember it. I go back and do it all over again"

She seems not only to be trying to come to terms with her own feelings about being small but also hoping that some of her

readers may take her perspective, and experience in imagination what smallness means.

Michelle understands intuitively that stories offer opportunities for writers and readers to develop self-awareness and social sensitivity.

By contrast, Jon, aged eleven, uses fantasy to explore what he calls possibilities and to try out experiences which in real life are unlikely to happen. His stories are always about space yet the interpersonal exchanges which occur and the expressions of feeling and intention have their origins in real life. For example, Jargon Plage, 'a slimy green tetrapod', experiences fluctuating emotions as he carries out his doomed escape from the cell on Planet Tetran and interacts with his robot guards.

The main point for Jon, however, seems to be to enable him to take on the role of another person and so extend his range of experiences. He says: 'In adventures you could get a super muscle builder who could crash a car, or Asterix's magic potion. On other planets it's even better. You could be adapted to methane. You have even more possibilities. This earth has limited possibilities. We don't know what it's like on other planets. Adventure stories have possibilities, space stories have even more. You don't need to be limited by human life. This is the best mode I'm in. I may be able to incorporate social life into space stories'.

Very young children are less articulate in describing the function which imaginative writing has for them. Their stories, I have suggested, usually contain plenty of action but little references to inner feelings or motives. The accompanying picture is usually an integral and expressive

part of the narrative and, although events can seem disconnected to the reader, they are probably clear in the mind of the writer. Five-year-old Francis, for example, is happy with his story The Pirate's Magic Cave and sees no need to elaborate for other people's benefit:

"The pirates had a big boat
In the cave there were hundreds of gold guards
They're pretending they're his friends
When he's not looking they'll bash up his boat."

He says. 'It's my best one because I think it's more exciting than the Wizard one', and goes on, 'I like it ending nasty and frightening things'. His friend Isabelle agrees. 'Sometimes I like happy endings and sometimes I like nasty ones, especially if they're nasty to princesses. I like them beaten up to have exciting bits!'

By seven or eight children can describe more about their own writing processes. Eight-year-old Johanna's evaluation of one story shows her awareness of how she can in fantasy take on a new role:

"I put imaginary things in and I thought about it a lot. It was a fantasy because I would like to have a tree house and rescue someone. I especially dream about rescuing people. They say, 'Thank you. You saved my life!'".

Straightforward wish-fulfilment is a common theme amongst younger children when they talk about stories, yet a longing for magic things can often go alongside delight in the observation of everyday experiences. So Simon, at eight, talks about the value which the reading and writing of stories has for him:

"Ideas come from my imagination. I imagine I'm in a secret garden. There's a magic vine that gives you everything you wish for"

Yet the content is rooted in reality:

"When I'm eighteen I'll look back to when I was eight and see what I wrote. I would think I was doing interesting things - finding birds, watching kestrels and kites, and finding acorns".

The magic lands which have such a fascination for young writers often contain extremely realistic people and situations, as

Joanne, aged eight, explains:

"I need to put children in it. It makes it good if it's a fairy tale but not an actual fairy tale - not something that is true but it sounds true. They live in a cottage with mother and father and play with toys, like Moonface and Saucepan, and of course that is true. Some of the lands are true but some aren't. Those that sound true are ones where you buy things and they're a lot of money, so that's true in the shops. Some of it is impossible and some isn't".

She does seem to perceive links between the worlds of reality and imagination, and children of this age will often express dissatisfaction with a story simply because it goes beyond the bounds of credibility. Young adolescents, who are more likely to deal with complexities of emotion and intention in their stories, will quite consciously describe aspects of the environment to achieve the right effect and use the events of a narrative symbolically to illustrate an issue. Tracy, at thirteen, explains how she has deliberately created a sombre atmosphere as a backdrop to her story, Doom for the Lion which is about the cruel killing of a lion by a tiger:

"The November sky was sinking and was heavy on the mountain. And the last of the yellow leaves were falling to the ground. The lion was getting ready for winter "

While she indicates the emotions of both killer and victim, at a deeper level she is concerned with the issue of violence and its long-term implications for other people. The story ends:

"His wife was taken to a zoo with his cubs to live behind bars. No more zebras or hunting no more freedom their lives were wrecked completely wrecked"

Other children in her class question the author's motives for writing such a gloomy piece, but they show that they share Tracy's concern about cruelty. She justifies the sad theme although she would rather have a happy ending:

Tracy: "I liked writing about animals because I like animals. I like the words. I don't like the way the lion is killed"

Katy: "Why did you write it then? You could have a fight and then have them slink off into the jungle."

Tracy: "That's not good enough. That's not realistic. It's better to end the story completely."

Katy: "I think the story shows that if it hadn't been for man the lion wouldn't have been killed. Is that the idea, that man shouldn't interfere?"

Tracy: "Yes. All this trying to interfere with the peaceful life that animals are trying to lead. They're going to chop down all these jungles to make more land, and they don't need more land. They're greedy"

Sian: "The thing is, they say if a man goes and shoots someone in the street, he didn't do it on purpose....he's insane. They give him five years in prison. If a lion kills someone they shoot the poor thing. It's not fair. Animals don't understand.... "

Like Tolkien, these young people have perceived the deeper layer of meaning which can underlie the surface content of a story.

The imaginary and the real

These interpretations by young writers of their own work seem to indicate that this kind of activity is of value to them, but the implications for education continue to be controversial. Do children's symbolic transformations of real-life experiences into imaginative ones deepen their understanding or simply distort it? Should children be trained to differentiate clearly between reality and the world of the imagination ?

In the nineteenth century it was actually considered by some to be harmful to read imaginative stories to young children. Tucker(1982,p.59), for example, describes how one Victorian educator, Mrs.Trimmer, criticised the use of fairy stories because they 'fill the heads of children with confused notions of wonderful and supernatural events'. Similarly, Montessori argued that it was wrong to encourage fantasy in pre-school children since they were not intellectually capable of distinguishing between the imaginary and the real. (She quotes an example of one child who jumped out of the window in imitation of Goldilocks!). Unlike Froebel, who gave a central place in his educational philosophy to the development of the imagination in young children, she stressed that children should be trained to learn about real-life situations. To her, make-believe had no positive influence on the growth of the intellect.

A similar view-point appears in the Board of Education (1927) Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers in which the authors, while recognising that composition can be used to improve fluency and technical accuracy in written English, are still very cautious about the value of 'exercises in invention, such as fairy tales or imaginary auto-biographies which illustrate merely the unrestrained play of the fancy and the love of make-believe'. They argue that 'fluency and fertility of invention are unfortunately not incompatible with serious inability to write a statement or description demanding accuracy, clearness of arrangement, sense of proportion and right choice of words'. In the present day, there are still educators who deliberately exclude imaginative activities from their curriculum on the

grounds that the school's domain is the real and not the imaginary. (The language programmes of Bereiter and Engelmann would be one example of this). Others might admit that imaginative activities are enjoyable as pastimes but they would argue that the teacher's role does not include the fostering of a world of make-believe. Fantasy play would be discouraged because its focus is not on real-life tasks; fiction would be used in the classroom as a means of developing children's reading skills, story-writing as a way of extending writing abilities. Even political arguments have been used to devalue the use of the imagination in the education of children. For example, in Russia, after the Revolution social realism was deemed to be more suitable for children than fairy tales and myth.

The inner world of imagination

At the other extreme, influenced by the literature on psychoanalysis, some educators have argued that the symbolic images of fantasy - wicked stepmothers, cruel giants and fierce monsters - can help young children to distance themselves from the fears and anxieties which form part of their lives. By their involvement in imaginative stories and fantasy play, children, it is claimed, are enabled to work through some of their emotional conflicts. The world of make-believe is viewed as playing a key role in the emotional development of the child. From this perspective, the themes of fantasy and imagination are real since they are about issues like life and death, loss of the parent, fear of separation and other anxieties of vital concern to the child.

Freud, in fact, was influenced in his work on the method of free association by one of his favourite authors, Ludwig Borne, who had written an essay 'The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in Three Days'. Jones (1953-57) mentions the effect which this had on Freud's thinking at the time and quotes from Borne:

"Here follows the practical prescription I promised. Take a few sheets of paper and for three days in succession write down without any falsification or hypocrisy, everything that comes into your head. Write what you think of yourself, of your women, of the Turkish War, of Goethe, of the Fonk criminal case, of the Last Judgement, of those senior to you in authority, - and when the three days are over you will be amazed at what novel and startling thoughts have welled up in you. This is the art of becoming an original writer in three days".
(Vol.1, p246)

Freud considered that the narratives invented by authors stand in the same relation to analysis as do genuine dreams, and suggested that they gave a direct insight into unconscious processes. His view of creativity is, of course, only a part of his wider theory of personality in which he argued that the individual is torn between the powerful instinctual drives of the unconscious and the strong restraints and defences of the super-ego and ego. Socialisation forbids the expression of primitive wishes which are therefore sublimated in other directions. If libidinous urges are channelled into socially acceptable activities, the person remains healthy; if turned in on the self, neurosis develops. One of the most important early experiences Freud argued, was the child's relationship to the parent of the opposite sex and the Oedipal crisis which results. The resolution of the Oedipus complex affects everyone and remains a theme in dreams and real life; creative activity is seen, then, as one way of coping with unacceptable Oedipal wishes through sublimation.

He compares the artist to the dreamer or the child at play: each is creating an imaginary world in which wishes may be fulfilled in fantasy. Freud wrote (1908):

"The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously while separating it sharply from reality".

Thus Freud sees common elements in play, dreaming, fantasy, art and neurosis, since each is motivated by powerful unconscious drives. He claimed that, just as dreams revealed the unconscious wishes of the dreamer, so the work of art provided a window into the unconscious. In fact, Freud (1908, 1913, 1928) interpreted a number of famous works of art to illustrate his hypothesis.

This psycho-analytic approach has continued in psychological studies of children as writers and readers. Bettelheim (1976) argues that even pre-school children can understand the underlying themes of fairy stories such as Little Red Riding Hood. These stories are understood symbolically - the latent content is used by young children in order to work through their own fears and anxieties. On the same theme, Gordon (1972, p.78) suggests that through the forms of art 'man has found a way of breaking the seal that locks him fast into his inner world' and goes on 'thus has man found, after all, a way of transmitting to others at least something of his intimate and personal experience, of gaining for it some social validation and of mediating to himself, to his own conscious self, a part of this elusive inner world'. She is saying that perhaps only by creating witches and giants, arduous journeys and incredible adventures, are children enabled to find words to describe moving experiences and intangible ideas.

Supporters of this viewpoint claim that through imaginative play, and the reading and writing of stories, children not only explore

themes that are meaningful to them but also achieve some kind of resolution of emotional conflicts. Literary analyses of children's writing have often adopted this kind of interpretive approach.

Holbrook (1966), for example, using creative writing as a means of helping difficult or backward children through their own personal crises, makes Freudian interpretations of their work. Thus in one piece, a cloud symbolises hate and aggression, and its name, Black Skeleton, reveals the writer's 'fear of death'. Holbrook sees this boy as regressing to an infant stage, through writing, in order to understand conflicts within himself.

But there are flaws in such an approach to children's imaginative work. It is possible that this disturbed adolescent was acting out his inward fears symbolically in his writing, but it is too easy to exaggerate the presence of symbols in every piece written by a child. Freud's approach is a reductionist one which undervalues the manifest content of the creative product. Furthermore, it is impossible, using such a model, to predict which individuals will become accomplished writers and which neurotics! This view in a sense transforms the forms of art into the jargon of psycho-analysis by treating the content of the imaginative work as the symptom of underlying disturbance. There is an obvious danger here that, by adopting such an approach, teachers may wrongly project intense emotions on to the child and miss the real ideas which are being expressed.

Taking the spectator role in imagination

These two broad approaches to the imaginative development of the child are strikingly different. The first views imagination as a flight from reality, an escapist activity which has no place in the school curriculum. The second argues that the internal world of the imagination is a real one. The first presents a rather narrow

concept of reality; the second, with its therapeutic orientation, can run the risk of mistakenly seeing emotional problems in everything which the child produces. I would suggest that, though it has been constructive for educators to focus on the reality of the inner experience of the child, the resolution of emotional conflicts can only be one aspect of the imaginative process.

Recent studies have shown, however, that it is also possible to demonstrate links between the imagination and children's social and intellectual development.

Perkins (1981) explores the idea that imaginative processes are not simply the result of unconscious links between ideas but are really to do with rational problem-solving and the conscious taking of decisions. In one study he asked subjects to think aloud as they wrote a poem without analysing what was happening. If an idea occurred, they were asked to remember the thoughts which preceded the idea. Results suggested that imaginative processes are made up of both rational and intuitive components. He de-mystified the idea of 'the moment of truth' and argued instead that a work of art is created logically by the artist. The impression that an idea comes 'out of the blue' or springs from the unconscious is mistaken. Instead, Perkins suggests, the moment of insight represents the final part in a series of logical steps which have been carried out very quickly. Emig's research (discussed in Chapter 3) into composing processes would also bear out this hypothesis.

Again, literary individuals give some support for this conclusion.

Keats wrote in a letter to a friend:

"My judgement is as active while I am actually writing as my imagination. In fact, all my faculties are strongly excited and in their full play".

(quoted in Abbs, 1976, p 69)

Like Tolkien, he seems to be claiming a strongly rational and self-aware aspect to the creative process. Hardy(1977) expresses a point of view which is commonly found in the literature on the philosophy of English teaching when she writes in her analysis of the function of narrative:

"We often tend to see the novel as competing with the world of happenings. I should prefer to see it as the continuation, in disguising and isolating art, of the remembering, dreaming, and planning that is in life imposed on the uncertain, attenuated, interrupted and unpredictable or meaningless flow of happenings"

(p.14)

Hardy is arguing that narrative is not only an aesthetic phenomenon invented by artists but is a fundamental way of organising experience which underlies dreaming, day-dreaming, predicting events in the future, analysing happenings in the past, coming to terms with relationships and learning about ourselves. In order to live, she is saying, we make up stories about ourselves and others. In her view, 'two adults gossiping over the garden fence or a child fantasising about Bionic Man are, like the novelist, engaged in the narrative motions of human consciousness'. (p.12)

Britton (1970, 1977), in his influential work on children's imaginative writing, takes a similar perspective. Story-telling is not simply a form of escapism which will, with maturity, be replaced by more realistic concepts of the world, but is also one important means through which individuals build systematic representations of experiences which provide both an interpretation of the past and a system for anticipating, or even making, the future. Fantasy, he argues, mediates between the individual's psychological needs and the constraints of reality and he argues that, as users of language, we orient ourselves in either of two ways, participant or spectator. When we take the participant role, we are recording, reporting or classifying the world as it is, just as a scientist writes a report or a journalist using the

BRITTON'S FUNCTIONAL MODEL OF WRITTEN UTTERANCES

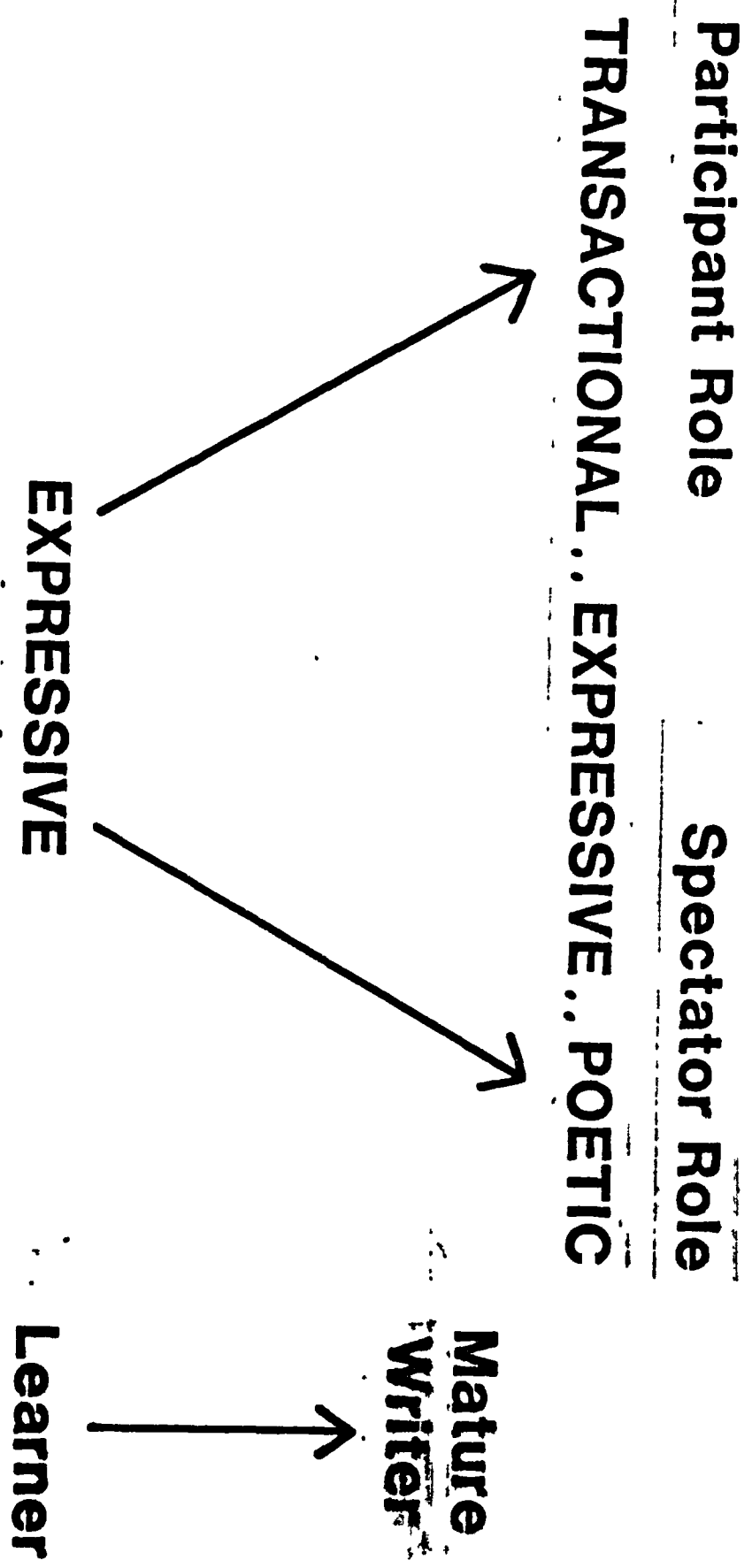


Figure 1.

transactional mode of writing records an event. By contrast, when we take the spectator role, we attempt to shape our picture of the world in order to evaluate experience; this kind of experience tends to be written about in the poetic mode.

Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975) write:

"As participants, our feelings will tend to be sparked off in action; as spectators, we are able to savour their quality as feelings. As participants, we are caught up in a kaleidoscope of emotions; as spectators, we have these emotions in perspective". (p.81)

Britton's model of written utterances is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1.

From this standpoint, the writing of imaginative stories has the function of helping children to meet the demands of the real world more effectively. Taking a similar perspective, Applebee(1978) demonstrates how very young children use stories as a means of distancing themselves from events in their own lives. By creating characters, actions and settings, they gain insights into real-life happenings. He, too, notices developmental trends in social sensitivity, self-awareness and ability to identify underlying themes in narratives. Applebee's research is concerned with the stories which children tell and read.

Other researchers (Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan. 1980) show how young writers can use the world of imagination as a means of understanding their own lives.

This type of approach to narrative certainly confirms the self-reports of children, yet avoids the extremes of focusing too heavily on deep-seated, emotional conflicts in the child. Furthermore, links exist between this approach and recent findings in the field of social cognition, in particular the work by psychologists on the purposes and effects of social role-taking.

The relevance of research in social-role-taking.

The literature on social cognition gives useful insights into the function which make-believe might have for children's social and intellectual development. Research into social role-taking (by which is meant the ability to relate the perspective of another person to one's own) was pioneered by Flavell(1968) with his identification of levels of role-taking ability. The earliest stage, he claims, involves a lack of recognition that the other person's viewpoint differs from one's own; the next shows awareness of the other's perspective but little understanding of it; in later stages, the child indicates a growth of empathic awareness about the intentions, thoughts and feelings of other people. Piaget (1932) had already pointed the way when he argued that early childhood involves a process of decentring in which both social and cognitive factors interact. The Piagetian view is that children come to take the perspective of others as egocentric thinking declines and that with maturity comes the ability to understand what other people are thinking and feeling. Piaget(1932,p.393) claims that, through reciprocity and mutually shared meanings, the individual develops in understanding of self and others. In other words, the individual is actively constructing thought in co-operation with other people. Although Piaget has been criticised about his views on the actual age at which children are capable of this kind of social communication (Borke,1971,1975; Donaldson, 1978; Hughes and Donaldson, 1983; Light, 1980), there is a growing body of research which confirms that self-understanding is reached through social activity and that the individual comes to see himself or herself by taking on the role of the other. This process of social decentration seems to be aided by activities like socio-dramatic play(Garvey and Berndt 1980) and role-playing or acting (Chandler,1972,1973;

Hartup, 1970; Hoffmann, 1976). Light, (1980, p.30) influenced by Mead's (1934) ideas on the effect of internal dialogues between self and other, stresses that the role-playing need not actually happen but may be acted out in solitary play:

"The child may not only practise adult roles but also role-taking activities like those involved in competitive or co-operative situations. He may rehearse past or future interactions with others, imagining the responses of another occupying a complementary role. In these respects solitary play may provide an important context for role-taking developments".

Furthermore, a number of investigators have begun to explore the links which may be made between the development of social cognition in children and their growing competence in the comprehension and creation of stories, (Brown, Collins and Harris, 1978; Stein and Goldman, 1975).

Stories written for and by children are often about goal-directed behaviour set in a social and interpersonal context, (Applebee, 1978; Botvin and Sutton-Smith, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1979), focussing on friendship, interpersonal conflicts and problems to do with authority figures and people with power. The understanding of such stories relies on knowledge about social interactions and the solution of problems which arise in everyday life.

Stein and Goldman (1981) suggest that in order to understand the behaviour of another person we need to understand our own motives and intentions; this process, they argue, is similar to the comprehension process involved in creating a story character with problems to solve and difficulties to overcome. They claim that the development of knowledge about intentionality, interpersonal relations and personality characteristics is important both for models of story comprehension and for social development in real life. A similar argument is presented by psychologists investigating children's moral reasoning. Damon (1977) and Selman

and Byrne (1974), gave children incomplete stories and inferred their level of moral reasoning from the type of consequence which they produced. In addition, research into developmental changes in children's concepts of the personality characteristics of others (Livesley and Bromley, 1973); Peevers and Secord, 1973) has required subjects to write descriptions of their friends. Since children often do in fact incorporate their friends into stories which they write, it is not difficult to make connections between studies of children's social cognition and studies of children's creation of imaginary characters in a narrative.

Of course, children's stories very often incorporate fantasy. I have discussed earlier some of the different views which theorists hold as to the role of fantasy in childhood. Scarlett and Wolf (1979) are strongly critical of Freud's (1908) contrast between fantasy and reality-oriented cognition. They do not accept that fantasy is the antithesis of cognition but argue that it is a mode of thought akin to logic which is slowly constructed throughout childhood. These ideas are further explored in Chapter 2.

It can clearly be argued that imaginative activities do indeed have an important learning function both as a preparation for future social situations and as a deepening of understanding of self and others. Singer and Singer (1979) view the activity of fantasy as 'a form of information - processing or cognitive behaviour' and see 'the ability to stand situations on their heads and get perspective on them as originating in early childhood experiences with imaginative, make-believe play' (p.211). Clearly this is an important area for investigation and much research remains to be done to resolve the controversies arising from it. The essence of the argument is that symbolic activities - for example, those expressed in make-believe play, role-taking, story-telling or the writing of imaginative narratives - have an important function in the

development of reflective thinking and social competence. The implications of this for child-rearing and education are enormous. Light, writing specifically about the value of fantasy play, concludes that symbolic play should be regarded as 'an indicator of the process whereby egocentrism is transcended'. (p.75). Again, Smith (1982) pointing to the educational value of socio-dramatic play and its function in developing innovative skills, writes: 'Fantasy provides play - which would otherwise be sensori-motor 'practice' play (Piaget, 1951) - with internal goals which can structure it and bring it to a more useful level of complexity'.

The view that imaginative role-taking is much more than an assimilative activity which reflects a distorted view of reality and that it can play a constructive part in a child's social and intellectual development is one which may be echoed in the research into children's writing. The writing of stories, if viewed along the same perspective, may be seen as an important learning activity in which not only are technical skills acquired but also children discover psychological and social truths about themselves and others.

Conclusion

There seems to be growing evidence from a number of sources that imaginative activities are not only enjoyable in themselves but also have clear intellectual, social and emotional benefits to the children who participate in them. As Furth (1978, p.102) writes:

"The playful attitude is a healthy and psychologically sensible strategy to cope with a world that is beyond the reach of adequate comprehension. It selectively focuses on what can be understood and avoids having to deal with other points of view that could disturb the present intellectual balance".

Moreover, the work on mutuality and reciprocity has important implications for the teaching of imaginative writing. If a

writing community is created in the classroom, there are many benefits to the child. The writing conference, as described by Graves (1983) in Chapter 3 of this thesis, has the function of creating an unthreatening context within which ideas can be formulated and roles experienced in a tentative and exploratory way. The growing sense of audience can be developed with important outcomes for social relationships in real life. Characters can be created which provide an opportunity for enacting situations which have already happened or speculating about events which might happen. Adventures may be experienced through the writing of stories without the problem of coping with everyday constraints. Further, children may use the stories as a means of re-enacting painful or disturbing events in their own lives and, through this symbolic enactment, keeping control of the situation and possibly resolving it. Again, mysterious or deeply personal thoughts and feelings can be expressed in a symbolic way which captures their meaning.

As we shall see in later chapters, some of the children's writing mainly reflects their world as they see it. Yet at the same time, this writing also shows that children may at times use it as a way of coming to terms with new or disturbing experiences. Their writing on issues like death, loss, separation, violence is in some ways a reflection of things as they are perceived by the child but in other ways shows how they try to understand them. As one twelve-year-old girl said, 'Entering in your imagination into the world of other people is like finding doorways into their land'.

In the field of writing in particular, research that investigates the social and cognitive learning which results from the use of the imagination has an important role to play in the

justification of the arts curriculum in schools. The encouragement to write can encompass subjective and objective ways of knowing both about the inner world of experience and about external reality. More research needs to be done to test hypotheses that imaginative writing helps the child to shape ideas, to explore lines of thought in a playful or tentative way and to develop in the capacity to take the perspective of other people, but investigations which focus only on the end-product run the risk of greatly under-estimating the intentions of the child. More study needs to be done on the processes which underlie children's use of fantasy and the meaning which it has for them. Children themselves can illuminate the sources of their thinking, and sensitive observations of composing processes are feasible, as Emig(1971) and Graves(1984) have shown. The fact that there are wide individual differences in the capacity of children to use their imaginations in a constructive way is also a matter of importance since it raises the question of the extent to which these processes can be nurtured or inhibited by the responses of other people. We still know very little about the conditions within which the imagination of children can best be fostered but again research into writing process by Britton,(1970); by Graves,(1983) and by Wason,(1984) suggests the need for trust in an audience and reciprocity between teacher and child; moreover, if a 'writing community' is created in the classroom, the child is much more likely to find an authentic voice.

Finally, any study of the value of the imagination and cognitive development needs to set limits. There is a danger of going too far in either of two directions. Too great a reliance on fantasy can result in unstable, egocentric patterns of thought which have little meaning for other people and which lack form and coherence.

On the other hand, if the individual denies the free flow of imaginative processes he is likely to be dominated by forms which come from outside and which lack life and feeling ; in these conditions, the child's authentic voice may never be found. Smith (1982) makes this point in the context of play when he argues that 'creative outcomes are likely to be increased if there is a balance between fantasy play (assimilative) and more accommodative thoughts and behaviours'. (p.152)

It seems appropriate to end with John Fowles' aside to the reader in The French Lieutenant's Woman where he writes that we are all novelists in the sense that we are in the habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves:

"We screen in our minds hypotheses about how we might behave about what might happen to us; and these novelistic or cinematic hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow". (p.294).

CHAPTER 2.

Children's Development as Writers of Stories.

Introduction

Although children's spoken language development has been widely documented by psychologists, educators and psycholinguists, it is only recently that research has focused on children as writers. One issue in education has been the fact that although most children become fluent speakers, many do not become at all accomplished as writers. Despite Graves (1979, p.2) contention that 'we underestimate what children can do in the writing process', we are still ^{far} from understanding fully why some children develop as writers while others do not.

One explanation may well be that initially the emphasis in teaching is on writing as an end in itself rather than a means of achieving the purposes of the child. The assumption is that once the child has mastered the skill, then he or she will be able to express meaning appropriately. The problem is that the teacher then tends to take on the role of evaluator - testing rather than reading what the child has to say. Thus many children seem to find that writing in school is divorced from what they want to say. In Shaughnessy's (1977, p7) words, writing becomes 'but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know, then passing into the hands of a stranger who reads it with a lawyer's eyes, searching for flaws'. Too often children fail to enter into the community of writers and readers as Graves, (1983) in the primary school context and Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen, (1975) in the secondary context have noted with concern.

In this chapter I examine general developmental trends in the writing process as they relate to narrative writing. It would

be inappropriate to ignore the experiences of the pre-school years which children bring to their relatively new task of learning to write. Therefore I begin by examining the possibility that there are links to be made between earlier imaginative activities, such as play and drawing, and narrative-writing at school. Sex differences in the themes which children explore are considered in this section.

Next I look briefly at the skills which children have to master if they are to become accomplished as writers. I end the chapter by examining some research which investigates the changing concepts which children have about the structure of stories.

Early stages in writing development: drawing, play and story-telling as precursors of narrative writing.

If we are to understand more about the growth of children's writing abilities it is helpful to look at the developmental context within which they learn to write. Vygotsky (1978, p 116) for example, has written:

"Make believe play, drawing and writing can be viewed as different moments in an essentially unified process of written language development".

If he is right, there may be parallels between the structure and the structures which emerge in play and story-telling and those which later appear in children's written narratives. Again, in the early stages children may be using writing to serve functions which are already satisfied by play, by drawing and by speech.

We do not know much about the first steps which children take in learning to write. Vygotsky (1978) saw writing as growing out of drawing; to him, the first squiggles which pre-school children produce are 'the first precursors of future writing' (1978, p.115).

In order to learn to write, the child has to discover that not only can he draw things but that he can also 'draw' sounds. From this perspective,

learning

to read and learning to write both involve the ability to differentiate between pictures and symbols. In order to do this, children seem to develop hypotheses about the principles of writing just as they do when they learn to talk. There are a number of studies which chart a gradual progression. Ferreiro (1980) suggests that children take quite a long time to discover that sounds can be represented by symbols; that idea has to be explored before they grasp the principles of alphabetic writing. Gardner (1980) has observed that as early as the age of two, some children have categorised certain activity as 'writing' and will try to imitate the flow of a script. In fact, he suggests that although they do not understand that particular graphic units correspond to particular sounds, they do seem to have grasped that some 'marks' represent words. He too suggests that the realisation of a direct correspondence between written and spoken words only comes gradually. Children will show their concept of writing by producing strings of letters as they mouth words like 'once upon a time'. By school age, most children seem to be able to distinguish between drawing and writing; yet until the child has learned to write fluently, drawing remains a powerful medium for expressing feeling well into the primary school years.

As Gardner (1980, p.155) says:

"Once writing mechanics and literary accomplishment have advanced sufficiently (as they ought to by the age of nine or ten), the possibility of achieving in words what was once attempted in drawings comes alive: the stage is set for the decline - or demise - of graphic expression"

Case studies, such as that of Bissex (1980) indicate that very young children experiment with writing long before anyone teaches them. Bissex observed that her son used writing as an extension of both speech and drawing in order to categorise and label. The signs and captions which accompanied his drawings later became

extended into more elaborated writing.

Apart from simple imitation, what is it about writing which young children find enjoyable? Gardner and Wolf(1979) point out that during the pre-school period the child uses symbols of various kinds to capture his experience and to communicate with others. He may also be extending the function of several symbol systems - speaking, drawing, play - into the newly acquired one of writing. Thus in the right conditions "he uses written language for the purposes already important to him when he talks, and when he plays" (Gundlach, 1982,p.136). Britton's (1983) observation of a two-year-old confirms this. It does seem from these studies and observations that children spend a considerable amount of time in the world of the imagination because of their need to work out issues of both personal and conceptual significance to them; symbolic play or narrative is one way of doing this, As Winner & Gardner (1979, p.xii) write:

"The three-year-old is seduced by a world of pretence and imagination. Only a stunted adult is ever completely released from the enveloping charms of such a world".

From this perspective it is hardly surprising that young children often make a drawing an integral part of their story. Graves(1983) suggests that such drawings are rehearsals for writing. Similarly Gardner(1980) argues that when children combine writing and drawing, the writing is secondary in importance, a mere support for the drawing. Initially the drawing contains far more action than the writing and it is only later that the child realises the narrative possibilities of writing. Gardner (p.155) gives illuminating examples of a set of drawings collected by Hildreth (1941) from a child who drew trains over a ten year period. The

role of writing changed during this time. In early childhood it was simply a decoration on the trains; in middle childhood, the tracks and trains became the decoration since the narrative was now conveyed in written words; in the final pieces, the trains simply illustrated the stories and poems since new emotions and adventures were expressed by the words themselves or by the size of the writing and pressure on the paper. Gundlach (1982,p.137-138) too uses a similar case study to show how writing grows out of drawing. The drawings seem to serve an important function for children. Gardner describes how his son Jerry between the ages of five and six became obsessed with depicting Star Wars, drawing not only the characters but also the dramatic adventures in which they took part. Jerry was 'replaying' the scenes of Star Wars for himself. As Gardner interprets the activity (1980,p.112):

"At times ... Jerry seemed simply to want to describe to someone how something looked or how it occurred. Much more frequently, however, one received the unmistakable impression that the act of drawing was in itself an important expression, one essential for the well-being of the child. In describing this act, we may perhaps come to understand why children of this age draw so much, and with such passion, tension and expressiveness".

It is interesting too that the drawings were often accompanied by little stories on themes of aggression, violence and even killing which paralleled the dramas which he often created in his fantasy play. Some psychologists stress the deep emotional significance which this kind of narrative activity has for children(Bettelheim, 1976; Pitcher and Prelinger, 1963) but ^{one} does not need to be a Freudian to conclude that the creation of stories - whether through play, drawing or writing - may be a useful mechanism which the child uses in order to make sense of relationships, events and emotions in his world. In fact, such a cognitive interpretation

of the purpose of narrative for children has been supported by research in social cognition (as outlined in Chapter 1). Garvey (1977) discusses what she calls 'enactment' in children's play when she describes children adopting the voices and mannerisms of other people familiar to them, e.g. a parent admonishing a child. Again, Rubin and Wolf (1979) demonstrate the pre-school child's increasingly ability to take on the perspective of others in a variety of contexts. They show how children learn to sustain a set of differentiated roles as they become more accomplished as story-tellers. They write:(p.27)

"Through the elaboration and co-ordination of elements within the story - plot, characterisation, theme, tone, narrative stance - the child becomes able to construct and maintain the story boundary delimiting the sphere of the imaginary event".

In fact, researchers in the University of Harvard Project Zero have plotted the development in the pre-school child of the ability to solve story problems within the framework of a narrative and the gradual freeing from props and gestures which competence in language brings. As Scarlett and Wolf (1979) show, children under the age of 3 demonstrate play which is mainly carried out by actions; by contrast, by the time the children are ready to enter infant school, the meaning of their stories is much more likely to be expressed in linguistic ways - through the re-counting of a narrative, through the dialogue of the characters in the story, and through communications which reveal a growing sense of audience. How does this change occur ? It seems that the three-year-old can only maintain a make-believe story when he is in direct contact with concrete props. He cannot create an imaginary world if he loses touch with the tangible objects of the real world. With the help of props - model figures, blocks etc.

- a kind of story language begins to emerge. Once the child has a story language, he begins to have the skill to convey characters' feelings and intentions and also to put himself in the perspective of his audience. This story language obviously cannot appear at once. It first emerges in story events when speech is fused with action. For example, Scarlett and Wolf describe a story told by C.(2.10) in which the dragon is picked up and makes a hissing noise at the other characters in turn. The story ends when the dragon knocks over all the characters, the trees and castle, all the time saying 'Bonk!'. It is clear that the entire meaning of the story is conveyed in the action. The sounds only decorate the action; even 'Bonk!' is onomatopoeic and simply reinforces the sound which the toys make as they are knocked over. Later, children use language to create a structure around what is being enacted. The same C. at 3.3 years puts a man prop outside the house and says, "Him looks in window" then puts the lion inside the house and says, "This one's in." A little more is conveyed by the language than the onlooker could infer from the action. Still later, the child can use language to express past and future events. C. at 3.8 takes a toy dragon and says, "He's gonna killed them" before making the dragon fly up to the turret and knock the king and queen off and saying, "And the dragon killed them". This sequence is repeated with other characters. By 3.11 C. shows that he can convey even more information which does not depend on the action and so frees himself to begin to express his character's feelings and intentions. He moves the dragon towards the king and queen and says, "He huffed and puffed and he blew; then the king and queen runned. (moves them towards the forest). Then he goes to the forest

(moves the dragon to the forest) and scares the prince so he goes back home (moves the prince to the castle)". It is obvious that without the words of the narrative it would actually be impossible to understand what the movements from castle to forest meant. In addition, children of this age begin to speak for their characters. C. at 4.0 says, "The elephant says there's no-one there" without moving the elephant character; C. adds "He (that is the elephant) says, "Knock, knock, knock who's there?". Then C. says for another character, "No-one!". Since there is no movement of props, virtually all of the meaning is conveyed through speech, and the story continues in the same sort of way. Similarly, children of this age begin to show awareness of the needs of their audience and will sometimes stop in the middle of the story to name something or explain something about a character. The boundary between narrative and real world seems to have become quite clearly marked in the child's mind, and a close study of this kind of activity can reveal much about the importance of fantasy in the pre-school years.

Smith (1984, p.13) argues that "in some important respects the fantasy and socio-dramatic play of children can be thought of as the precursors of later imaginative story-writing or telling. There are structural similarities and some psychologists have suggested more direct links". He notes parallels between the development of symbolic play and the development of language, although he is cautious in suggesting that one influences the other directly. However, he also describes the "narrative-like features of fantasy play". Fantasy themes are often built round particular 'plans', as Garvey's (1977) research has shown, such as 'telephoning'. 'avoiding threats', 'going on a trip'. 'healing/treating'. Furthermore, the children enact roles such as 'parent/child', 'husband/wife', 'doctor/nurse'

which reveal a great deal of social awareness and skill in portraying character. In fact, the relevance of role-taking activities such as these to real life has been explored by Hartshorn and Brantley (1973) who aimed to increase social responsibility among eight-year-olds, and by Chandler (1973) who attempted to decrease anti-social behaviour among delinquents by giving them practice in role-taking skills. While much research still needs to be done in order to clarify the links between socio-dramatic play and social-cognitive development, there do seem to be clear parallels between the narrative structure of fantasy play episodes and the later emergence of written stories. Smith (ibid, p.28) outlines these as follows:

" the creation of imaginary roles, actions and events; the co-ordination of a sequential plan or story-structure, including the initiation and termination of episodes; the reflection of stereotyped knowledge, including sex-role stereotypes, and exposure to the mass media, on the content of narratives".

Of relevance to this section is the evidence of sex-differences in the themes which young children explore in imaginative activities. Brooks-Gunn and Matthews (1979) and Garvey (1977) give examples which show clear sex differences in the roles which children enact during fantasy play episodes. A number of researchers (Cramer and Bryson; 1973; Cramer and Hogan, 1975; May, 1969) have identified patterns of sex differences in childrens' fantasy narratives. Rosenfeld, Huesman, Eron and Torney-Purta, (1982) in a study carried out on a large sample of first and third grade children devised scales which differentiated between the day-dreaming of boys and girls. In particular, boys scored higher than girls on the Active-Heroic Fantasy Scale, a scale "characterised by male sex-typed activities", and girls scored much higher than boys

on the Fanciful and Scary Fantasy Scale, a scale containing items which the authors interpret as 'feminine', e.g. reading fairy tales and playing at houses. In fact, Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1960) suggest that girls continue to play make-believe until an older age than boys. Girls in the Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) study used more affect in their stories than boys. In both the Ames (1966), and Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) studies of story-telling, violent themes were expressed by both boys and girls, but for girls the themes took the form of punishment and harm to people whereas boys played a more active part in adventures.

Rosenfeld et al (1982) would argue that boys and girls do not differ in the amount of fantasy which they produce but that they do differ significantly in their style of fantasy. Girls certainly seem more inclined to tell stories about mothering and nurturance while boys describe exploration and discovery. (Pitcher and Prelinger, 1963).

Graves (1983) in a personal communication has described the sex-differences which appear in children's story-writing in his sample. Boys, he argues, will venture further in their narratives. They go to distant lands and carry out daring adventures far from family and friends; girls, by contrast, are more likely to write about happenings which are nearer to home and school and which involve relationships with other people. Like Rosenfeld et al (1982) he is not commenting on differences in the quality of the narrative but simply differences in the content.

If we return directly to writing research, there appears to be some evidence that the skills of role-taking and empathy which develop throughout childhood can be charted in the growing complexity and sensitivity of the stories which children write, as Wilkinson,

Barnsley, Hanna, and Swan (1980) found in their work on the Crediton Project, a developmental study of writing in the school years. They gave children of 7, 10 and 13 the same four writing tasks: an autobiographical narrative, a fictional story, an account of how to play a game and a logical argument. With regard to imaginative writing, the authors found clear developmental trends. In particular, they found that 10 and 13-year olds produced more realistic themes than 7-year olds, with less reliance on fantasy; however, the older children dealt with the themes in a more imaginative way in the sense that they showed greater sensitivity to the feelings of their characters and more awareness of the needs of their audience. The authors noted developmental trends in the ability to take the other person's point of view and the ability to describe social relationships among characters. Thus from a more systematic experimental stance, Wilkinson and his colleagues seem to be arguing a similar point to Applebee, that the creation of narratives is one way in which children can explore the recurring themes and sets of values which exist in their social worlds.

From this social-cognitive perspective there is less emphasis on the expression of unconscious wishes and desires (although it is conceded that these may be present) and a greater emphasis on the child's growing conception of his world, the people in it and the value systems by which they live. As Applebee writes:(1978,p.133)

"And though eventually he will learn that some of this world is only fiction, it is specific characters and specific events which will be rejected; the recurrent patterns of values, the stable expectations about the roles and relationships which are part of his culture, will remain. It is these underlying patterns, not the witches and giants which give them concrete form, which make stories an important agent of socialisation, one of many modes through which the young are taught the values and standards of their elders".

The transition to written narratives presents many technical problems for the child but the way has been paved by the years of play, drawing and story-telling which precede it. Any account of imaginative writing process would be incomplete if it ignored the experiences in the world of fantasy and make-believe which are characteristic of the pre-school child.

The mastery of writing skills

At the same time, it would be unrealistic to ignore the technical skills which children need to acquire in order to become writers. Calkins (1983,p.11) has observed how children in the first grade respond to the invitation to write. She claims that over 90% of children come to school believing that they can write. They write as best they can, producing scribble-writing underneath drawings; many will sound out letters. Jose's story, for example, says "two people are playing tick-tac-toe".(Figure 2)

Figure 2. Jose's story "Two people are playing tick-tac-toe"



(Calkins, 1983, p. 11)

Calkins notes that whereas older children fret over how to write their stories better, first grade children fearlessly write letters, signs, books, out of a handful of consonants. "With child-like egocentricity, these children believed they were experts on a whole world of things". (ibid p.12) Calkins believes that the

older child, who has become rule-conscious and audience-aware, may need to rediscover his playful roots.

Clay (1975) observed five-year-old children in New Zealand during their first week in school. She points out that, unlike American children, these youngsters knew few letter names. Nonetheless, she saw that they displayed many of the behaviours described by Ferreiro (Clay, 1975):

"Children drew pictures and dictated captions;
they traced over the teacher's script;
they constructed messages using words around the room;
they remembered some words and wrote them independently;
they invented word forms;
they asked the teacher for help".

What she saw was a 'negotiation' between drawing skills and the control of language with the teacher acting as mediator. The child seemed to hold the meaning in the drawing while working on the written message. Like Calkins and Graves, she stressed the importance of allowing the child to take control of the writing process. As she writes:

"Editing was part of this early writing, but these checking processes sharpened the child's discrimination of what he knew and did not know. Such procedures build personal stores of written language knowledge that are very different from one child to another because of the personal nature of the expressive writing experiences and of the individual choices made".
(Clay, 1983, p. 264)

It is important for the teacher to accept what the child writes and to value it, whether it is a scribble, a string of letters or a jumbled story. Thus Clay is arguing that even at this early stage the child is acting on a theory of how things work - a strongly Piagetian explanation of the forward movement which does occur in children's writing.

This idea is confirmed by the work of Ferreiro (1978 a; b) who worked with Mexican and Swiss children between the ages of three

and five. The children seemed to have simple hypotheses about writing which changed with experience. One sequence made by a girl was:

- writing has shape (circles)
- shapes can be separated (several circles)
- shapes go in lines (several circles in linear arrangement)

The changes need to occur before the alphabetic principle of letter-sound relationships can begin to take place. These observations held with children from both literate and illiterate families.

Applebee (1978) and Britton (1970; 1982), as we have seen, suggest that many children use writing as a means of extending the story telling function of speech and play. Applebee shows how children often include aspects of speech in their stories. For example, they may write, "And do you know what happened next?" or dramatise what they have written by adopting a special voice for the various characters. Bissex (1980), observing her son Paul's writing development from five to eleven indicates how it became increasingly complex and differentiated over time; the plots and settings in the stories became more elaborate and the dialogue more subtle. Paul seemed to become more aware of his audience and she noticed a growing awareness of others and greater understanding of himself.

It is interesting to chart in more detail just how this development takes place as the child enters the primary school, and as the earlier squiggles and lines gradually conform to the conventions of writing. Graves (1981a) has noted the continuing role of speech in writing both for setting the scene and as a sort of rehearsal for what is to be written next. Sometimes the words are run together without a break. Even if the child is aware of the need for spaces between words, he may not write in

a linear fashion from left to right; words can go in columns, loops or even circles. Graves (ibid) and Bissex(1980) have both described the stages which children go through as they make the transition from speech to writing and point to the amount of spoken language (audible sounding or at least lip movements) which children produce before, during and after the written event. The end product is likely to give little indication on its own of the great effort which has gone into its creation. Graves'(ibid,p.223) example of the story 'A tornado went by' is typical of writing at this stage. (Figure 3)

Jamie is a child in the first-grade of a New Hampshire primary school.

Figure 3. Jamie's Composing

WRITING LINE	A	X	N					
SOUND LINE	T	T	T	N	Ae tonaido	D	D	D
COMMENT LINE				erases M makes an N	(tornado)			
WRITING LINE	D							A
SOUND LINE	D	D	Ae tonaido	Ae oo au	Ae To na do			
COMMENT LINE	Stops to check letter chart							

Graves notes how much sound Jamie produced during the fifteen minutes which he took to write his story. The writing was unassigned, and illustrated a drawing of a tornado's destruction based on a news item on television, that is a topic of personal importance to the child.

absence of signals from the conversational milieu' (p.177) They, argue that oral composition would be beneficial in fostering fluency and spontaneity throughout the school years, and they argue that the lack of external signals (as in conversation) can make composition like the job of 'the proverbial one-armed paper-hanger'. (p.207)

The presence of a sensitive teacher to 'hear' the child's gropings after meaning can greatly increase the confidence of young writers. Here seven-year-old Emma and her teacher try to find the right word to capture an experience: (Cowie and Hanrott` 1984, p.209)

Emma What word would you make if someone had just put a knife through you? (makes a noise)

' Teacher What do you think? What would it begin with?

Emma It could begin with 'H'...hussh...hoh...hoc... (keeps experimenting with sounds ... You should ask a Chinese person. They would know. Hoh... Huch...

Teacher Could you use a 'K'?

Emma How would you spell it? (Makes a sound) Hoeek! Now can I read it to you?

Teacher Yes.

Emma Title Hammer House of Horror. 'Once upon a time there lived a family and their names are Briony, Marc, Janina and Serana. (I changed my name!) and their father's and mother's names are Diana and Caspian. One fine day it was Janina's birthday. Her brothers came and her sisters came too. Her friend brought her a rusty knofe. 'O no! Not that rusty knife!' said Diana and Caspian In the morning a knock at the door - knock, knock. The mother said, 'Come in'. HOEEK!! Now that is the end of the story. THE END.

It is clearly important for Emma to get the right sound for the knife attack, and the teacher rightly gives time for the making of the sounds. By only reading the end-product it would be easy

to overlook the process which Emma has gone through, but by participating in the composition the teacher becomes the kind of sensitive audience who can enable the child to stand back and reflect on the event which she is trying to express in words.

The appearance of invented spellings by children is another aspect of the writing process which gives insight into the hypotheses which children are devising and into the value of having a teacher who is sympathetic and accepting. Reid (1975) noticed some children who invented their own spelling systems before they had received any instruction. The case-study by Bissex (1980) showed the same, and a belief in the educational value of the tolerance of invented spellings is expressed by Sowers (1981). Some of the words in Reid's sample were easy to decipher. (BAT for bait; KAM for came); others were more difficult (WHT for watched, where the sound of the letter H is taken for the 'ch' sound). In addition, it seemed that the children had noticed that vowels are often lost as we speak. So 'colour' became KLR and 'little' became LTL. The interesting finding is that the children devised their own principles of spelling based on their own phonological perceptions. Francis (1975) advises that it is best to leave children to discover higher level principles for themselves and is against the 'drilling' methods out of context which have traditionally been used to help poor spellers. Children who begin with invented spelling seem to make the transition to more conventional spelling, though it is not altogether clear just how this happens. The links between reading and writing activities are important. Francis (1975) suggests:

"Perhaps, as in speech, it is better that they grope for meaning and search for regularities in interesting material than they have them thrust on them in a form which runs the risk of being essentially boring". (p.168)

Finally, there is growing evidence Graves (1983; Kress 1982; Perera, 1984) of the value of drafting, revising, editing and proof-reading as essential to the development of writing competence. The requirement that the first attempt at a piece should be neat, well-structured and finished is an unrealistic expectation. This is an important aspect of the writing process which I explore more fully in Chapter 3. For the purposes of this chapter, I turn now to the development of structure in writing.

The analysis of narrative structure

While the interpretation of the content of children's stories has given rich insights into children's emotional and social development, there is another approach to the study of narrative which is relevant to this chapter. This approach focusses on the structure of the stories which children create.

Applebee's analysis of the Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) stories produced the predictable finding that as children get older so the number of words, characters and events in their stories increases. More interesting, however, was his finding that there are certain patterns in the growing complexity of the narratives told and written by children. He treated plots of stories as elements or incidents each of which has a series of attributes (e.g. characters, actions, settings, themes), and found that between the ages of 2 and 5 six types of structure could be identified, each of which corresponded closely to Vygotsky's (1962) stages in concept development. The structures are as

follows: heaps; unfocussed chains; sequences; focussed chains; primitive narratives; narratives. The earliest structure - a heap - is an organisation close to immediate perception, a kind of free association of ideas. It bears little relation to the material which is to be organised and there are few links from one sentence to the next. Here is an example of such a story told by Warren, aged 3 years 7 months: (Applebee, p.58-59)

"A girl and a boy, a mummy and maybe a daddy. And then a piggy. And then a horse. And maybe a cow. And a chair. And food. And a car. Maybe a painting. Maybe a baby. Maybe a mountain stone. Somebody threw a stone on a bear and the bear's head broke right off. A big stone, this big. And they didn't have glue either. They had to buy some at the store. You can't buy some in the morning. Tomorrow morning they're gonna buy some. Glue his head on. And the baby bear will look at a book"

There are parallels between this kind of story and verbal play in the pre-sleep monologues of Anthony noted by Weir (1962).

The story is, as Applebee suggests, a 'heap' of unconnected perceptions.

By contrast, a narrative shows a central episode round which the story is built; there is more audience awareness, incidents in the story are linked and they lead to a climax; in addition, there is a hero or heroine who holds the story together.

Applebee noted an interplay between form and content and suggested that the 'core' which holds the narrative together may be based either on perceptual bonds or more abstract ones like a theme or moral point. The story by Tracy, aged 5 years 8 months, illustrates this point: (ibid, p.66)

"There was a boy named Johnny Hong Kong and finally he grew up and went to school and after that all he ever did was sit all day and think. He hardly even went to the bathroom. And he thought every day and every thought he thought up his head got bigger and bigger. One day it got so big he had to go and live up in the attic with trunks and winter clothes.

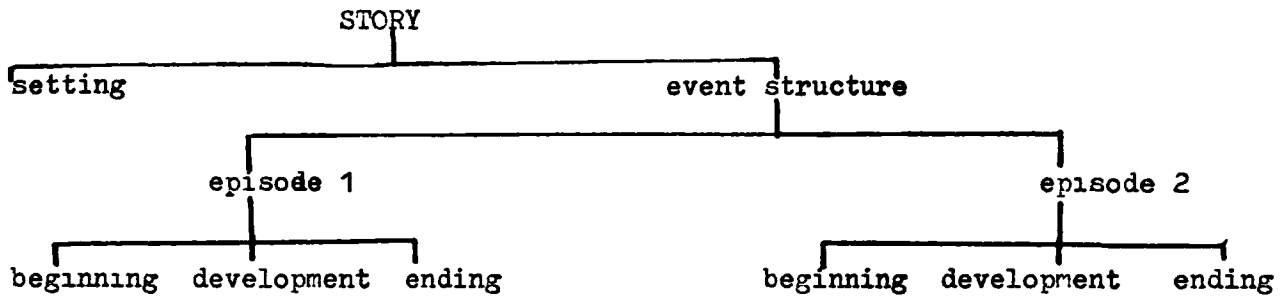
So his mother bought some goldfish and let them live in his head - he swallowed them - and every time he thought, a fish would eat it up until he was even so he never thought again, and he felt much better."

It can be seen that the centre round which the story is built develops in the course of the story and there is a movement towards the climax and final moral.

The idea of plot, however, is one which only emerges gradually. Sutton-Smith (1979) suggests that, despite the wide variation in individual uses of story, young children from 2 to 5 years tend to produce 'frame' stories - that is, stories which consist mainly of a beginning and an end. These are often not very satisfying to listen to because they tend to be about stock characters who experience unbalancing and unresolved adventures. Unlike older children, these young authors see no need for the re-establishment of equilibrium. Other researchers, (Botvin, 1976; Pradl, 1979) comparing the structure of stories composed by 3 and 12 year olds, found that whereas younger children tend to tell stories which are mainly beginnings and endings, older ones will distribute aspects of their stories over the categories beginning, middle and end.

More systematic research has come from the work on story grammars pioneered by Mandler and Johnson (1977) who use structural analysis to assess the developmental level of a writer. They suggest that a good story has four parts: a setting, the beginning, development and an ending. The simplest complete story consists of a setting and an event structure. As Figure 5 shows, the event structure can be subdivided into an episode which contains a beginning leading to a development which finally causes the ending.

Figure 5 The Story Grammar of Mandler and Johnson



From the adult reader's point of view, if stories are grammatically well-formed, they are remembered better. Conversely, it takes adults longer to read and summarise scrambled stories than stories which conform to a logical sequence. (Stein and Nezworski, (1978) For children there are developmental differences. Six and seven year olds recall SETTINGS, initiating events and consequences more frequently than attempts to resolve the problem in the story; nine and ten year olds recall attempts to find a resolution equally well. (Mandler and Johnson, 1977; Stein and Glenn, 1979) Young children rank consequences as being of more importance than initiating events; the reverse is true for older children (Stein and Glenn, 1979)

Research shows that children gradually acquire expectations about the structure of a story. Even novice writers indicate that they have a basic sense of story (Pitcher and Prelinger, 1963; Applebee, 1978) by giving their narratives settings, characters, actions and outcomes (Gundlach, 1981). However, children often miss out aspects in their own stories so the story grammar method has been used to plot the development of complexity in children's narratives, both for generalising about structure in stories and for pinpointing flaws in individual stories.

Kroll and Anson (1984) analysed stories written by 54 9-year-olds and identified three main patterns:

- (i) events are strung together in a linear fashion; there is a horizontal pattern in the sense that each episode is complete in itself
- (ii) events are connected by embedding; episodes are embedded rather than linked sequentially so that the outcome of a goal causes a new episode
- (iii) a combination of linear and embedded episodes; such stories tend to be longer and more detailed.

It is important to remember that these authors do not suggest that the quality of a story depends on the development of structure. A simple linear narrative can be very effective, as Hemingway has shown; conversely, a complex structure with much embedding may lack good characterisation, description or atmosphere. As they put it: (ibid, p.179)

"Although complex structure can contribute to effectiveness especially when the complexity is the result of a fully developed character's involvement in an engaging quest, good stories entail the use of many other elements and story-telling devices"

They conclude that it is possible to use the following factors to assess development in the composing of stories by children:

1. Good characterisation, usually in the form of a central hero or heroine with personality, motives and intentions.
2. Use of dialogue to differentiate characters; this is a useful device for entering into another person's experience.
3. Special linguistic devices which grow out of the 'voice' which a story-teller uses for effect. For example, 'Nearer the cliff I got' or 'Atop a pinnacle of rock'.
4. Choice of words for effect, creating atmosphere, setting a scene, e.g. 'They slung their guns on their backs'
5. The use of alliteration for poetic effects, e.g. 'the hissing snake'.

Conclusion

Thus it can be argued that through the use of imaginative story telling and story writing children extend their horizons away from their own immediate experience to the realms of the possible, or even the impossible. As I suggested in Chapter 1, from this point of view fantasy is not unreal but is part of the process of grappling with reality. As Pradl (1979,p.25) suggests:

"The shapes of narratives create rather than imitate the actions of our ordinary existence By reinforcing their ability to predict and anticipate, we help children to construct unique identities which is the only way they will become masters of their own social destinies".

The use of narrative enables the young writers to distance themselves from events and people which are hard to understand. By removing stories to a fantasy realm, the children can deal more easily with them. Stories represent ways of dealing with the difficult and the unacceptable, of explaining what might be and of playing with ideas.

It does seem that with age children are more and more able to deal with a widening range of themes and characters in their stories; there seem to be sex differences in the themes which children choose to develop. The evidence seems also to offer some confirmation of Vygotsky's (1978,p.116) perception of the links to be made between writing, and other forms of symbolic representation, such as make-believe play and drawing which he saw as 'different moments in an essentially unified process of development of written language'. Although many aspects of the process through which children make the transition from speech, drawing and play to written language are still far from being understood, observations of children's imaginative activities show how they progress to narrative writing, with all the

opportunities which it offers them, from their earlier experiences of play, telling and listening to stories, and drawing. It is possible to draw parallels between the themes and narrative structures which emerge in play and those which appear later in children's stories. Although some of the evidence is tentative, it is suggested in this thesis that the learning which occurs as children take on a variety of roles in play may continue as they find out that through the creation of characters in narratives they can capture familiar experiences, have adventures which take them beyond their normal environments, express emotions and experiment with different modes of behaviour.

Furthermore, the role of the adult seems to be important in developing or inhibiting the child's sense of audience. Again, parallels may be drawn with the work on adult intervention in children's fantasy play (Smith, Dalgleish and Herzmack, 1981). It is possible that such play experiences contribute to later writing skills. It certainly seems that parents and teachers play a key role in the child's sense of audience (Britton, 1975) and the child's sense of working in a community of writers (Graves, 1983) and this idea is explored in more detail in the discussion of the child's sense of audience in Chapter 3.

We do not yet know whether the influences are general or specific. Does the early experience of fantasy play provide practice for the elaboration of particular themes in stories or does it relate in a wider sense to the development of social-perspective taking skills ?

By the time they are in junior school, children seem to develop greater 'distancing' skills, not only spatially as they place the events of a narrative in increasingly unfamiliar settings

but also psychologically as they give the characters that people their stories experiences and feelings. This kind of imaginative role-taking enables children to take on the point of view of the characters about whom they write. Increased distancing in imagination in the role-taking sense also characterises the development of the ability to identify the reader's point of view. Alongside this runs the increasing complexity of the structure of children's stories and a growing awareness of possible underlying meanings. As I showed in Chapter 1, there do also seem to be developmental trends in children's ability to express feeling, to analyse intention and to understand the motives which underlie actions. There is evidence too to suggest that there is a growth with age in young writers' self-awareness and capacity for entering into the experience of others.

I will return to Britton who writes: (1982)

"It remains for me to point out that make-believe play (embracing the social environment children construct with their playthings), story telling, listening to stories, pictorial representation and the talk that complements it, story-reading and story-writing - these are all activities in the role of spectator. As I have suggested, I believe it is this characteristic that develops a need for the written language in young children and the intention to master it. In such activities children are sorting themselves out, progressively distinguishing what is from what seems, strengthening their hold on reality by a consideration of alternatives" (pp.164-5)

CHAPTER 3A REVIEW OF WRITING RESEARCHIntroduction

In this chapter I consider five approaches to the investigation of writing. I begin with descriptions by authors of their own composing processes and examine the possibility that there may be parallels between accomplished adult writing and children's writing. Next, I look at case-studies which plot individual children's development as writers over a period of time and which tend to be carried out within a particular theoretical framework. Thirdly, I look at experimental studies which investigate the writing of larger samples of children and which, by their nature, focus more on the end-product than on the process which led up to it. Fourthly, I look at writing research which considers young authors in a particular context, the writing community of the school class-room. From this perspective writing is viewed as a craft which flourishes when it is facilitated by sensitive teachers who encourage children themselves to take control of the writing process.

Finally, I review research which analyses the structure of children's writing ^{within} a developmental framework. The story-grammar method in particular is described for its analysis of episodes and themes in narratives, both spoken and written.

What the authors tell us

Many authors have given introspective accounts of their composing processes which can seem conflicting and confusing to the researcher; certain common themes, however, do seem to emerge. Some view writing as a rational activity and stress the value of

planning in advance. Edgar Allan Poe, for example, quoted in Winner (1982,p.37) saw his creative process as conscious, rational craft. Of The Raven he wrote:

(sic)
 "No one point in its composition is referrible, either to accident or intuition ... the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem"

By contrast, some writers take the view that the creative process is unconscious and outside rational control. Robert Graves (1949) writes that:

"The nucleus of every poem worthy of the name is rhythmically formed in the poet's mind during a trance-like suspension of his normal habits of thought, by the supra-logical reconciliation of conflicting emotional ideas". (p.1)

Solzhenitzyn (1980) describes an intense need to capture his experiences in prison camp for posterity - a compulsion to commit these experiences to paper which he could not ignore. Surprisingly, even a popular writer like Enid Blyton (Meek, Barton and Warlow, 1978.p.222) whose books would appear to be written to formula, describes the eidetic imagery which for her makes the starting point for a story:

"I shut my eyes for a few minutes, with my portable typewriter on my knee; I make my mind a blank and wait - and then, as clearly as I would see real children, my characters stand before me in my mind's eye ... The story is enacted almost as if I had a private cinema screen there".

Many writers and researchers, however, point out the interaction between conscious and unconscious processes, and some have identified certain stages in the emergence of a creative work. Hesketh (1966,p.47) recalls that when anyone asks her how she writes poetry she can only reply, 'I don't know, it seems to come out sideways when I'm not thinking'. However, in a retrospective analysis of her own creative process in writing and rewriting one poem over a period of twenty years, she elaborates on this statement

by saying that, while at first poems arise involuntarily 'from the unconscious', later they require conscious 'curbing and training' in the long, laborious activity of refining and developing. To her:

"Poetry is like a harnessing of the inscrutable, barbaric subconscious with the highly civilised and meticulous conscious mind".

Wason (1984) in his essay on the search for commitment in writing would agree. He distinguishes two modes of thought which are involved in the writing process: 1) an uncritical exteriorisation of thought and 2) a critical rewriting of the exteriorised thought. He claims that if these two modes are allowed to interact, they result in 'happy writing'. The novelist Murray (1978) is describing a similar process when he points out the value of allowing oneself to write a series of drafts since, he argues, the act of revising becomes in itself an act of discovery, an integral part of the creative process. From this standpoint he claims that writing grows out of the act of drafting and revision and that the final product cannot be precisely predicted in advance. In fact, many parallels can be found between Murray's composing processes, as noted in a diary which he kept as he wrote a novel, and the behaviour of young children as they write or prepare to write, as observed by Graves in his classroom-based research (Murray and Graves, 1980). Murray and Graves write:

"Revising is, in part, a matter of making up reasons for what worked by accident, or at least wasn't made consciously. It is the rational end of an irrational process. The intent often comes after the act".

This interplay between conscious and unconscious processes in writing is a theme which recurs in the literature. Wallas (1926), for example, attempts to identify stages through which individuals pass as they work

on an imaginative product.

Basing his research on retrospective accounts by authors and other creative thinkers, Wallis suggested that the creative process is made up of four stages: preparation, in which the problem is explored; incubation, in which conscious attention is turned away from the problem; illumination, in which the germ of an idea or the basic solution to the problem appears suddenly; and verification, in which the idea is improved, revised and refined. Later, Barron (1963) argued that a process of regression is involved in creative thinking. It is a temporary regression (unlike the regression of the psychotic patient) 'in the service of the ego' in which the artist returns to conscious awareness bearing with him the fruits of his 'descent' into more primitive layers of thought. This type of analysis is illuminating but the role of the unconscious in this process is still mysterious. In one study of the part which the unconscious might play in the creative process, Patrick (1935;1937) asked poets, painters and scientists to think aloud as they composed. Her findings confirm the idea of stages in the creative process but she could not conclude with certainty that the incubation period was actually a time of 'unconscious' work. In other words, she was not able to show that ideas sank into the unconscious, underwent change and resurfaced in a different form. (Of course, by its nature the process would be difficult to observe!)

Winner (1982,p.42) is also sceptical about the power of the unconscious to direct creative thought and points out the discrepancy between laboratory studies and self-reports by artists. She suggests a more plausible explanation, based on Arnheim's(1962) work, that the creative process is a series of 'deliberate, conscious logical choices' (p.43). She does not discount the unconscious mind but argues that a great deal of creative activity is shown to be

goal-directed and rational. Similarly, Harding (1963,p.198) suggests a 'pre-cognitive' ordering of incipient thoughts. By looking at the work of writers he sees 'traces of a richer matrix, perhaps more complex, from which their words and images have emerged'. The problem is, he argues, that the writer has to fuse the infinite complexity of experience with the range of subtle ways in which language captures such experiences. Sometimes this language reflects aspects of the experience of which the writer himself is not fully aware:

"But in some minds the language processes reflect not only the main experience, in statements that could be more or less paraphrased, but also much subtler features of the non-verbal experiences, and features of which the writer may have no awareness except through the overtones of what he finds himself writing. Even then, he may fail to notice what he has said". (ibid,pp.187-8)

A recent study of artists and writers as they work (Perkins 1981) seems to point to a combination of rational thought processes and intuition. Perkins argues that there need be no conflict between the two. He suggests there is no need to invoke mysterious powers of inspiration to explain the emergence of a work of art; the brain is designed to reason and 'the flash of insight' may in fact be the culmination of a series of logical steps which take place very quickly in the artist's mind but which are ⁱⁿ accessible to conscious scrutiny.

Of course, these accounts of creative processes may be relevant only to highly imaginative individuals. It could be argued that there is a qualitative difference between the thinking processes of accomplished authors and those of ordinary people. Furthermore, autobiographical accounts of the creative process present difficulties for the researcher because the data tend to be unsystematically gathered and comparisons between one writer and another are usually impossible. But it is worth holding these insights in one's mind

as one turns to look at studies of children and their creative writing. As we shall see, the studies of children's writing cover a variety of perspectives as they focus on the developmental stages through which children progress in their writing ability.

Case-studies of children's writing

The case-study approach is one which is commonly used in writing research, since by focussing on the individual in depth it is possible to gain insights into that person's composing processes, particularly if the researcher and the young writer have established a close, trusting relationship. Some of the earlier studies stressed the therapeutic benefits of imaginative writing. Hourd and Cooper (1959) and Holbrook (1968) demonstrate within a neo-Freudian framework how children with emotional problems can find a release through the medium of poetry - and narrative - writing. As Hourd and Cooper (ibid, p.149) claim, they have been:

" .. struck over and over again by the help that verse writing brings to these children who suffer psychic scars. It brings the chance of rediscovery of their own image in the time-space symbols of words".

Again, from a sociological perspective, Kohl (1967), teaching in a ghetto school, has used imaginative writing as one means of giving back to alienated Harlem children a sense of their own worth.

In the 1960s a spate of influential books and articles on the philosophy of English teaching reveals a similar concern for the development of sensitivity and emotional awareness in young people. Some are by experienced teachers of English (Creber, 1965; Dixon, 1967) while others are by accomplished authors (Michael Baldwin, 1966; Ted Hughes, 1968). These manuals take a developmental perspective, rely on case-study material to illustrate their argument and emphasise qualities such as 'personal growth', 'sense and sensitivity' and 'self-awareness'. The focus, though

not Freudian in origin, is on creating conditions which enable children to be in touch with their own feelings and those of others. The authors present examples of writing to demonstrate the different perspectives which can be revealed by children as they progress through childhood to adolescence. The sensitivity of the teacher is viewed as a key factor in this expression of emotion.

A more cognitive approach appears in the Schools Council Report based on a two-year project, 'English in the Middle Years of Schooling', in which Mallett and Newsome, (1977, p.165) use the case-study approach in order to illustrate their thesis that "writing offers a means of thinking through by oneself the complications of, and justifications for a point of view, the subtleties and intricacies of states of feeling". While Holbrook is concerned with young writers' struggles to come to terms with deep-seated psychological conflicts, Mallett and Newsome, influenced by the work of Britton (1971) and Harding (1963), are more concerned with the child's search for competence in handling ideas and thoughts. In order to arrive at this state of competence, they argue, the child should see the act of writing as purposive, and this he can do if 1) he believes that what he writes is seriously considered by the reader and 2) if he considers that through the act of writing he has come to know more about his own thoughts and feelings. "If both conditions are to be met, the writing task must offer an invitation to tell, explore or state, and suggest a real purpose, rather than an exercise or mere practice. Perhaps, most important of all, the writing must fulfil the pupil's purposes before it can fulfil the teacher's". (ibid, p.166)

Clearly, the focus here is on a partnership between teacher and pupil and in the creation of the kinds of conditions within such meaningful writing may occur. The authors use case-studies in order

to show not only how ordinary school themes may be tackled but also to indicate the range of writing functions which children can use at different ages.

Instead of the intuitive response to the child's writing which is typical of Hourd and Cooper, Mallett and Newsome apply the functional categories which make up Britton's model of writing and within that framework make inferences about the writing. One nine-year-old girl, Kerry, is studied in some depth, and a number of pieces of Kerry's writing are taken as examples of expressive, poetic and transactional modes. Her sources are examined (for example, where she consults reference books for information), her ability to marshall an argument and the principles of organisation of material which she uses are analysed, and the extent to which she has mastered a poetic construction discussed. The result is that we have a rounded picture of one individual's competence as a writer, and at the same time, see beyond the individual to the abstract functions which she uses.

In extract 10 (pp 191-192), Kerry describes a deep-sea wreck; the function is expressive/poetic since in this piece of imaginative writing she produces an 'unpremeditated, expressive speech monologue, rapidly shifting from one picture to another as it comes to mind'. If she had attempted to shape the narrative, to make more of the episode, she might well have sacrificed some of the vitality gained through the expressive treatment. An extract indicates this vitality:

" ... A rough voice echoed. Keep you here, don't need a guard, nobody ever comes round ere. You won't have a nice time tomorrow, your father will be poor before you knew and if he ain't you shall die. I will hold you as hostage tomorrow, and you going to be in trouble tomorrow Do you hear. He grabbed Gwen by the collar and threw her roughly on the stone floor. I will go now. Leaving her unconsciously on the floor he left....."

Mallett and Newsome suggest that a second piece of writing on the theme of shipwreck has much the same characteristics as the story. They categorise it similarly as expressive/poetic, but note Kerry's greater concern with shaping and form; they point out that the poem has the capacity to 'support implicitness in the context, a dynamic feature of which many writers in the 8 to 10 year old age range can put to good advantage'. (ibid,p.193):

The shipwreck

The impatient waves
lashing against the
straining boat, the sky
looking heavy with rain.
Feet skuttling anxiously by on deck.
Terrified, disaster has befallen us, torrents
Of rain falls heavily.
The waves now pounding roughly against the swaying boat.
Were done for, finished.
Given up hope of every living!
All hopes have gone.
Brave minute boats, help is coming,

Through all the dangers of the sea, help is coming,
We're safe now, safe!
Out of danger now.
Help is on its way.
A miracle has come,
Safe, safe from the dangers of the sea.
Safe!

This concern for form, however, reaches a peak in another poem (classified as poetic) in which the expressiveness of The Shipwreck has changed becoming part of the sub-text of the poem, rather than part of the poem itself. In the authors' words, "it informs the pattern of feeling but is not part of the texture" (ibid,p.193):

Function: poetic

The elegant mermaid

The elegant mermaid sitting on her throne,
her locks of hair swaying behind her,
Her tail coiled behind her.
Her voice ringing like bells,
Sweet and charming.
But her eyes filled with evil.
Death to all men who dare to enter her kingdom.
The waves iridescent, rocking gently.
Creatures jumping to attention at her orders.
It's her kingdom!
All hers!
Every rock, every wave, is hers!
every man is hers!

At the same time, Kerry is able to produce transactional pieces of writing which are impersonal and clearly influenced by text books. Mallett and Newsome argue that Kerry's adherence to chronological order in the reporting of events results in some coherence but when this principle is not used she runs into difficulties in making sense of the facts which she has collected. Extract e (transactional) has over-all coherence, even though there are some unexplained gaps in the argument. It is not clear how and why Keppel gives way to Nelson; neither does she explain which flag is prouder than Keppel's (ibid, p.194)

e Sources: secondary - experience mediated by books; principle of organisation: chronological; function: transactional

Ships

Victory, a very famous ship, is the fifth ship of the Royal Navy to bear this name. The first Victory, launched in 1559, of 800 tons was the flagship of Sir John Hawkins at the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. In 1778 France entered the war on the side of the American colonists and Victory was hurried to Portsmouth and in May she hoisted the flag of Admiral Keppel in command of the Channel Fleet. And Nelson soon left England, later Victory led his people into battle, but Victory was damaged, so very damaged she had to be towed to Gibraltar to be repaired and soon with a crew on board she sailed for Portsmouth and soon she had battered sides and creaking masts. On December 22nd she arrived at Sheerness and here she had the proudest flag she was ever priveleged to wear.

On the other hand, extract f (transactional) indicates the difficulties of re-structuring information which Kerry is experiencing. (ibid, p.194)

f Sources: secondary - experience mediated by books; principle of organisation: classificatory; function: transactional.

A powerboat is made from fibreglass, its heavier at the back than the front. The shape of the ship enables it to move. It skiddes across the water. Once they had a powerboat race. They started at Portsmouth. The sampan is like a floating market, it is a flat boat and it is moved by a pole. The pole is stuck in the ground under the water and above the water the boat moves. It islike a floating market with about five boats (sampan) moving along the water with food stored in the boat. It is a lovely sight! Aircraft carrier is a ship that carrys aircraft. It is made from steel. It has a jetty leaning out from the side. A river boat is transport for Africa. The bottom of the river barge is wood. The other parts are steel. It takes people across rivers. It is a good transport, It is build like a raft. It carries oil. A passanger liner carrys passengers. It is made of steel. It is a very tall ship. A racing yacht has

a huge sail. Well two huge sails. It billows out in the wind. The racing yacht is made of fibreglass or wood.

Here she has no chronological sequence to give some order to her piece and the result is a random collection of isolated pieces of information.

From their analysis of eight pieces of writing, the authors conclude that a general pattern emerges and suggest that Kerry writes in the expressive and poetic modes with skill, but that she finds the transactional function very difficult, particularly when she lacks the guideline of a chronological sequence. They also note the crucial role of the teacher whom they see not only as an assessor but as a person who is willing to share in the experiences and developing ideas of the child.

This kind of case-study is systematic and operates within a particular theoretical framework, the functional model developed by Britton. Thus, although Mallett and Newsome have chosen an able young writer to illustrate their thesis, they are testing out their ideas on the extracts in such a way that their readers (who are likely to be teachers) could apply them to pupils in general. However, Mallett and Newsome still draw their conclusions about process from the end-products. their chosen extracts of writing. The accounts of writing by authors imply that process too needs to be examined.

A radically different case-study approach was pioneered by Emig (1971). She used this method in a systematic way within a framework of experimental group research. She was less interested in the end-product than in the students' feelings, attitudes and self-concepts in the process of writing. She drew her data from tape-recordings of comments made by 12th-

grade students who had been asked to compose aloud.

They were recorded during 4 sessions; 3 sessions were concerned with writing on set themes and the fourth was an autobiographical account of the students' writing experiences. Despite the difficulty of thinking aloud during the writing process, Emig's subjects on the whole co-operated with the experiment which has marked an important break-through in this field, with implications both for writing research and for practice in the class-room.

In her analysis of the data, Emig distinguishes between two dominant modes of composing - the reflexive, the mode which focusses on the writer's feelings and thoughts about his or her own experiences, a personal, exploratory mode, and the extensive, the mode which focusses on the writer's wish to communicate, an impersonal, 'reportial' mode of writing. In some ways this distinction is very similar to Britton's functional model but Emig finds her scheme both looser and more accurate and suggests that because of the relative unfamiliarity of her terms they avoid the connotations of 'poetic' and 'transactional'. However, like Britton, she suggests that both grow out of the expressive mode.

She found in her observations of her sample that extensive writing occurs mostly as a school-sponsored activity. Adults (mainly teachers) are the main audience; the writing is detached and students are less likely to experience writing blocks. By contrast, 'reflexive' writing has a much longer pre-writing period. More frequently the writer himself is the audience or a trusted peer. Much time is spent on contemplating the topic and there is often a great deal of stopping and starting. In fact, some of the students in Emig's sample could not compose aloud in the reflexive mode and displayed rejecting or or blocking behaviour. She noticed that as her subjects composed

they alternated between actual writing behaviour and certain specifiable hesitation phenomena, for example, critical comments, digressions or repetition. Even silence she considered an important factor in the writing process.

Her study has implications for research in the writing process. Graves (1983) in particular, has followed up her recommendations that this type of case-study approach should be extended to different age-groups and should be used over a longer period of time in the 'natural' setting of the class-room. As far as implications for the teachers go, Emig's research findings suggest that much school-sponsored writing is limited since it is too often extensive in mode; usually the emphasis is on evaluation and criticism by the teacher rather than on the development of the writer's own themes. Further, she suggests that there is a real mismatch between what is taught in school and the practices of the best writers. She recommends that teachers themselves should write since it is through experiencing writing blocks, pre-writing behaviour, pauses for reflection, drafting and re-drafting that the adult can best understand the difficulties which face young writers. This recommendation has been reiterated by Graves who directs in-service writing programmes for teachers in which they study their own writing processes as well as those of children.

In the absence of such training, the process is too easily truncated and over-simplified in schools, especially in their lack of provision for 'pre-writing' activities. Some of Emig's subjects mentioned pre-writing activities which lasted for up to two years. They also complained of the lack of space and time which they were allowed in school for reformulation and reconceptualisation. They said that teachers over-emphasised correction of

peripherals (such as spelling, punctuation and length) at the expense of the essential quality of the writing.

Emig concludes emphatically:

"American high-schools and colleges must seriously and immediately consider that the teacher-centred presentation of composition, like the teacher-centred presentation of almost every other segment of a curriculum, is pedagogically, developmentally and politically an anachronism" (ibid, p.100)

Samples of Young Writers

One obvious criticism of research in the previous section would be that the numbers of subjects are small and that it is difficult to make generalisations on the basis of such data. Critics might say that interesting, intuitive insights may be gained, but little more. Thus, it is useful to describe systematic experimental attempts using larger samples of subjects and testing specific hypotheses.

Emig (1963) tested the following two hypotheses:

- (i) that student writers organise by outlining
- (ii) that in order to produce the most well-organised theme, students should make a formal plan in advance.

25 students of English in the 11th grade submitted over a period of eight weeks all writing which they had done in preparation for 5 different themes set by the teacher. Table 1 indicates that of the 109 expository themes which the students submitted, only 40 (36.7%) were accompanied by an outline (which Emig defines as any scheme related to the composition of the theme); of these outlines only 9 qualified as formal outlines, while 31 were informal.

Table 1

Types of Outlines accompanying 109 Expository Themes written by
25 eleventh Grade Students.

Themes as assigned	Total no. of expos. themes written	Total no. of outlines	No. of informal outlines	No. of formal outlines.
1	25	15	9	6
2	14	6	6	0
3	23	6	5	1
4	22	4	3	1
5	25	9	8	1
Total	109	40	31	9

(quoted in Emig (1971,p.26)

The second hypothesis was examined when independent judges assessed the quality of the essays on the basis of organisation. No correlation was found between the presence or absence of an outline and the formal grade which the student received from the judges.

Emig's results give little support to the commonly held view that young writers should plan before they write. She agrees with Bruner (1962) in his discussion of language processes:

of
 "The speaker or writer rides ahead rather than behind
 the edge of his utterance. He is organising ahead,
 marshalling thoughts and words and transforming them
 into utterances, anticipating what requires saying".

(ibid, p.103)

It is worth looking back at the introspective accounts by authors who frequently report the experience of finding that the writing arises out of the composing process itself. Emig's study demonstrates that, despite the difficulties which face the researcher in this field, it is possible to make predictions and test them. Such an investigation complements the case-study

approach and the introspective account though it lacks the richness of individual data.

On a more ambitious scale, Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod and Rosen (1975) used an experimental design to test hypotheses arising from the functional model of writing which is described in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Influenced by Moffett's (1968) work in discourse where growth in writing is seen as a cognitive phenomenon, Britton and his colleagues in the Schools Council Project, The Development of Writing Abilities (1975) devised a hierarchy of categories which they applied to adolescent writing across the curriculum in the secondary school. The aim of the study was to confirm the hypothesis that writing progresses from the expressive to the poetic on the one hand and from the expressive to the transactional on the other. They asked two main questions:

- (i) What is school writing for ?
- (ii) To whom is it addressed ?

The team looked at a sample of 2000 scripts collected from 65 secondary schools and analysed the data for the child's sense of audience and the function of the writing.

With regard to the first question, they argued that a sense of audience is very important in determining how writing is done. For example, there is a difference in the ways in which we write to a friend, an acquaintance or a newspaper. In school, pupils write mostly for the teacher. But what makes for differences between pieces of writing is not just who the reader is but how the writer sees his reader. In distinguishing between different sorts of 'sense of audience' found in school writing, the research team suggested six main categories:

1. Child to self
2. Child to trusted adult
3. Pupil to teacher as partner in dialogue
4. Pupil to teacher seen as assessor or examiner
5. Child to peers as co-worker, friend etc.
6. Writer to his readers or unknown audience.

1. Child to self writing takes no account of the needs of any other reader, as in diaries, notes and rough drafts.
2. Writing to trusted adult writing is attempted only with adults with whom the child feels very secure. For example:

If I think about what I would really like to do, I feel as if I would like to curl into a ball and let everything go on without me. Whichever way I turn, I feel trapped. College doesn't seem a release, it seems a new trap, another place where I have to conform to something ... (Carol 18)

3. Pupil to teacher-as-partner covers material which is centrally concerned with the subject matter of the school, although the writer's personal feelings may be included. The teacher is likely to respond to the writing so that it is part of a dialogue:

...If we look through history at any one incident if that did not happen or if something else happened instead we could have a totally different way of life. I think that any main decisions that are taken should be aimed at the future. So it will not affect the future population in any ways that would harm their ways of life. Political discussions are very important to the future. If China was allowed to join the UN this could help the future tremendously (John 14 'China and the UN')

4. Pupil to teacher as examiner writing refers to all writing in which the pupil is producing work simply to satisfy a teacher's demand and on which he expects to be judged. For example:

Tamworth was Peel's own constituency. All the Tamworth Manifesto was, that Peel said the Tories would do. He said that Tories would support the reform act and would not let past grievances exist any longer. These were the two most important things that Peel said, as they have been the Conservatives word up to this day and have not yet been broken.

(Janet 15 'The Tamworth Manifesto')

- 5.. Pupil to peers writing has its focus on the peer group. For example:

The rooms were changed a lot and so also was Mr Comer. The way the rooms were changed was. The benches were in different orders and Mr Comer's desk was changed a lot too. The ways he changed were, there was no 'are you at your bench' or 'go to your bench and stay at it' or no 'Stay at your bench'. Mr Comer was also going round giving more of a helping hand than usual ...These effects weren't of him on the following Monday.

(Cyril 12 reporting to classmates)

6. Writer to unknown audience expresses the writer's sense of the general value of what he has to say. For example:

... A child quarrels in order to assert itself, and frequently fails to do so. Its main desire is to have supremacy over something. It cannot, in all probability, have any power over an adult and so has to find its power in breaking things or being the leader of a gang, This wish stems from the animal kingdom, where survival of the fittest means that only the strongest most powerful are successful. Animals only fight over serious matters, like where to live, and what to eat.

(Derek 15)

Table 2

Sense of audience by subject (%)

	English	History	Geography	RE	Science
Self	0	0	0	0	0
Trusted adult	5	0	0	4	0
Pupil-teacher dialogue	65	17	13	64	7
Teacher examiner	18	69	81	22	87
Peer Group	0	0	0	0	0
Public	6	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	6	14	6	10	6

From Table 2 it appears that writing for the teacher-as-examiner is over half of all school writing. This suggests that the single most important use for writing in secondary schools appears to be as a means of testing and not as a means of learning, except in English and Religious Education. Of course, teachers must assess their pupils' progress. But that so much of secondary school writing is concerned with

assessment is worrying because it suggests that the more important function of writing - its potential contribution to the mental, emotional and social development of the writer - is being neglected.

With regard to the second question, the authors argued that another major influence on writing is the writer's sense of what the writing is for. The functions of writing represented as a continuum are as follows:

Transactional - Expressive - Poetic

These the team define as

Expressive: in which it is taken for granted that the writer himself is of interest to the reader; he feels free to jump from anecdote to emotional outburst. It is a way of exploring thought in a tentative way or half-expressing attitudes. For example:

Before what I'm going to write .. Mr T told us what to do. It took a bit of getting through to some of the class and as they didn't understand they became restless and Mr. T had to interrupt what he was saying and deal with them. He shouldn't have to do this as they should know that if they don't understand they should listen again to what he is saying and perhaps they'll know what he's talking about

Transactional: in which it is taken for granted that the writer means what he says and can be challenged for its truthfulness to public knowledge and for its logicity. It is the typical language of science, intellectual enquiry, technology, trade, planning reporting etc. It is also the language most used in school writing.

Greater London Council Ambulance Service was built in 1969. Before it was built for them there was a place called the Red Cross. The Red Cross was made into a private service for all over the country

Poetic: in which it is taken for granted that 'true or false?' is not a relevant question. The writer takes it for granted that the reader will experience what is presented. Writing in the poetic function shows a heightened awareness of symbolic, aural and even visual qualities. For example:

Once upon a time there was a prince and he went for a ride on his horse and he went past a castle and there the most beautiful princess in the whole wide world....

Much writing seems to be on a continuum between the expressive and the transactional or between the expressive and the poetic. This applies to adult and children's writing. The demand for impersonal, unexpressive writing can actively inhibit learning because it isolates what is to be learned from the vital learning process - that of making new links between what is already known and the new information. The research team, believing in the importance of expressive writing, were perturbed by the analysis of school writing by function. Table 3 summarises the results.

Table 3

Function of Writing by Subject (percentage of sample)

	English	History	Geography	RE	Science
Transactional	34	88	88	57	92
Expressive	11	0	0	11	0
Poetic	39	2	0	12	0
Miscellaneous	26	10	12	20	8

If we put these figures beside the 'sense of audience' figures, we have a picture of secondary writing which begins as largely transactional written for a teacher who is going to assess it. In addition, there was hardly any writing by pupils younger than sixteen which could be categorised as speculative, theoretical or persuasive. This was not because such pupils are incapable of writing in these ways but because they were not given opportunities to do so.

The research team conclude by hoping that the results might achieve the following aims:

1. encourage teachers of all subjects to provide a variety of audiences for their pupils' writing so that they are not so often seen as the 'examiner'.
2. encourage teachers of all subjects to provide for their pupils a range of writing purposes (linked to a range of audiences) so that pupils are given more opportunity to express their thoughts on paper in a variety of ways - expressive, transactional and poetic.
3. encourage the use of written language as well as spoken for a wider range of thought processes: interpreting, reflecting, thinking creatively, as well as recording, reporting and classifying.
4. encourage teachers of all subjects to discuss together how language (spoken and written) can most effectively help their pupils to learn.

Britton's work has had a great impact on research into writing processes as well as educational practice but it has not been without its critics. Williams (1977,p.56) comments on the problems of coding the categories selected by the Schools Council team. She notes that of 2,122 scripts classified, 1,078 were not given the same audience category by all 3 assessors, and 1,428 were not given the same function category. Britten, Barrs and Burgess (1979) discuss the criticism on the grounds that "where there was two-thirds agreement we accepted this as a verdict, and where there was no verdict the item was omitted from further calculations". They were using 'nominal' categories and were not claiming to assign a quantitative value.

However, a more serious criticism comes from Wells (1983) who points out that the model used by the Schools Council team was developed in the absence of knowledge about how adults write, why they write and for whom. Wells himself has carried out a small-scale study of adult writing and notes the frequent occurrence of writing which fulfils more than one function simultaneously. In fact, by looking at the reasons which adults give for writing, Wells concluded that it was not justified to propose a dichotomous model unit expressive at the centre and poetic and transactional at the two extremes. He suggests that it is more probable that the two functions are not mutually exclusive. However, he did find that the audience categories which he devised were similar to these proposed by Britton and his colleagues.

Further attack comes from Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan (1980; 1983) who argue that the functional model concentrates too much on cognition and in this way ignores other aspects of the personality, in particular the emotions and the writer's sense of morality; they also point out that Britton's model ignores writing style.

Wilkinson and his colleagues (1980) on the Crediton Project propose a much broader model in the Piagetian tradition in which human development is seen as moving from the concrete to the abstract; from convention to uniqueness; from unconsciousness to awareness; from egocentrism to awareness of others. Four models of writing are suggested: cognitive, affective, moral and stylistic. Instead of trying to categorise a whole piece as 'transactional' or 'poetic', they focus on words, phrases and sentences as well as the completed piece of writing. Thus they

do not have the problem of forcing children's writing into the 'Procrustean bed' of a global function. The design of the Crediton Project was to give the same four writing tasks to children of seven, ten and thirteen. The children were asked to write an autobiography, 'my happiest or saddest day'; a story suggested by one of three pictures provided; an explanation of the rules of a game; an argument ('would it work if children came to school when they liked and did what they liked there?'). The first two tasks were aimed at the moral/affective dimensions and the second two for the cognitive dimension; measures of style applied to all four pieces of writing.

There were 150 pupils in the sample (600 scripts) and there was no quantitative analysis of the data; ratings were agreed by at least two members of the research team. For the purpose of this thesis I will focus only on the affective model (Table 4) which is given below.

Wilkinson and his colleagues give examples of writing by the three age-groups to illustrate the stages in sensitivity to feeling and emotion in self and others which children go through.

Their categories (A1 - A5), each subdivided in a developmental sequence, can be seen in the table.

Table 4 Wilkinson's Affective Model

5.3.2 Affective model:	
A1	<i>Self</i>
The writer expresses his emotion and his awareness of the nature of his own feelings, or implies his emotion by describing action from which the reader can infer that the writer was in the grip of an emotion.	
A1.1	The writer expresses or implies his own emotion, mechanically in some written work, explicitly in others, e.g. 'My feet were as wet as anything', 'I am afraid that day is a long, long, way away'.
A1.2	— not only expresses but evaluates emotion, e.g. 'The saddest day of my life', 'I did not like it indeed'.
A1.3	— shows awareness of self image, of how he appears or might appear, e.g. 'I looked like a fool'.
A1.4	— shows awareness of the springs and complexities of emotion, e.g. 'I got rather nervous about it and I couldn't find the way and went into another room and looked like a fool standing there asking where room one was'.
A1.5	— shows a general attitude or disposition, e.g. 'I long for the day when I can think about him without it hurting too much'.
A2	<i>Other people</i>
The writer shows an awareness of others both in relation to himself and as distinct identities.	
A2.1	— records the mere existence of other people as having been present. This is the single dimension others are present — acting, speaking — but no emotion is apparent by inference, e.g. 'The two boys went for a walk with their mother and they got lost and they came to a fence and that fence was electric and they was not lost...'
A2.2	— begins to indicate the separateness of others by, e.g. giving their actual words or significant actions 'I woke up, had my breakfast' is probably not significant; 'the old man smild' may well be.
A2.3	— the thoughts and feelings of others by quotation of actual words, perhaps as a dialogue, or by description of them, or actions indicating them. More perception called for than in the previous category though it might be fairly conventional.
A2.4	Analytical, interpretative comments on aspects of character and behaviour; or insightful quotation or dialogue.
A2.5	Consistently realized presentation of another person by a variety of means, perhaps by assuming persona.
A2.6	Ability to see a person and his interactions in extended context (e.g. a character in a novel).
A3	<i>Reader</i>
It is often argued that writing to an unknown or not well-enslaved reader will be poorer in quality since it lacks focus. Certainly the imaginative leap of the writer into the minds of others so as to grasp what terms have meaning for them must characterize effective communication.	
A3.1	— reader not catered for. Writing context bound, incomplete information, links missing.
A3.2	— the reader is a person or type of person to the writer. He may not be conscious of this, but rather attempts to fulfil expectations within the situation. He may do so partially but imperfectly.
A3.3	— the writer caters specifically for the reader, e.g. by relevant information, explanation (sometimes asides), shows an empathy with him, telling him what he needs to know to be able to interpret what he is told.
A4	<i>Environment</i>
The writer shows an awareness of physical or social surroundings, a sense of time and place. On the one hand the environment may be a source of special stimulus. On the other hand a 'restricted node' may not offer the necessary context. Getting the register right is a sign of awareness of social environment.	
A4.1	— assumes the environment.
A4.2	— describes or explains the environment, barely adequately giving background details, or gives enough details to clarify the background
A4.3	— responds to the environment in a way that shows it has been especially significant and stimulating.
A4.4	— chooses environmental items to achieve an effect, thus showing a higher degree of selectivity and evaluation than that suggested by A4.3.
A5	<i>Reality</i>
This is concerned with how far a writer recognizes a distinction between the world of phenomena, and the world of imagination, between magical and logical thinking: with how far the writer's own preferences or beliefs can come to an accommodation with external reality: with how far the literal-metaphorical aspects of experience can be perceived in complexity.	
A5.1	Confusion of the subjective and objective world. This seems to occur with young children who believe that stories are 'true'.
A5.2	— gives a literal account without evaluation.
A5.3	— interprets reality in terms of fantasy.

Self

This is a complete category in itself.

Self: expresses emotions, becomes aware of these emotions; evaluates them, recognizes their springs and complexities; becomes more able to tolerate conflicting emotions, becomes aware of motives behind apparent motives. Self becomes aware of self-image and possible image in the eyes of others.

Others

Under this class we have two sections — the one is, quite simply, other people as manifested in the writing; the second is the reader of a piece of writing. Both illustrate the degree of egocentrism of the writer.

Other People

The movement in this class is concerned with the degree to which others are perceived as distinct identities. In young children's writing there is often no topic but the self: or others appear as servicing agencies. There is a process apparent in some writing of others manifesting themselves as individual, signalled in terms of the amount of information given about them, of what they say and do, and how this expresses what they think and feel. The more mature writer will display a considerable degree of empathy towards others, whether they are his characters or other people about whom he is writing.

The Reader

Young children beginning to write have so great a cognitive and physical problem that their effort tends to be concerned completely with the task in hand. Over the years there is likely to be a development of greater reader awareness. It is often argued that writing to an unknown or not well-envisaged audience will be poor in quality since it lacks focus. Certainly the imaginative leap into the mind of another so that one grasps what terms have meaning for him is a kind of empathy. It would seem that the task is always greater than with the spoken language for in most cases of the latter the addressee is immediately present. This category is similar to that of 'reader awareness' in the stylistic categories to be discussed later, but here we are concerned with the degree of empathy rather than with the nature of the register used.

Reality

Here we have two categories. 'Environment' is the individual's relationship with the physical and social world in a fairly obvious sense. 'Reality' is his coping with the human condition.

Environment

The physical world is frequently absent in the writing of young children because they do not have the capacity to fill in the scenery, or the realization that it might be an important part of context. With older children there is often inclusion of environmental details; of a specific response to, a celebration of the environment, perhaps in the form of focus on a particular detail, for its literal or metaphorical detail — 'heaven in a grain of sand' for instance.

Reality

An early stage of response seems to be one in which reality and fiction are not differentiated. As Applebee (1978) says, the earliest interpretation seems to be that a story is something that happens in the past, a *history* rather than a fictional construct. (p. 38)

There is then a recognition, comparatively early with some children, of the difference between the two. Carol, just over four, is in conversation with her mother:

What is this book *about*? she asked. 'Oh, a boy and a girl who go for a walk in England', I answered. She hunts round the pictures and puts her finger on the children, then, doubtfully, 'This book's not *real* England' 'It's about England, Carol'. Yes, but not real England, just paper England.

(Carol in Applebee, 1978, p. 39)

It should be noted though that some myths, strongly reinforced by adults, are believed for several years longer — that of Santa Claus for example. At any rate from this stage there is a movement towards accommodation with external reality which is never complete. It may be handled, literally, or in terms of fantasy, or in terms of imagination. Writing would seem to be particularly important here in that by its nature it gives opportunity for reflection and gestation.

For example, in the autobiography, a seven-year-old wrote this story:

"The saddest was when my dog got knocked down"

This literal statement shows no self-analysis (A1.0), no sense of its effect on others (A2.0), no setting (A4.0) is described and there are no explanations for the reader (A3.1); Finally, there is no 'distancing' or contextualization of the experience.

A more unusual piece is written by Jean, also aged seven:

"The saddest day was when my Grandad died and his wife was very upset because she had lived for 60 years with him and me and my sister were very very upset to. We all had to go up to my Grandad's house to comfort my Grandmother and stop her crying - and we stoped for two days i went with Granmar with my sister.

The End of my Story"

Jean evaluates her emotions (A1.2) and goes on to explain how she came to be sad (A1.4). She also expresses empathy for the feelings of her grandmother and grandfather, and between the two sisters and their grandmother. She describes the event literally (A5.2); she does not have a large vocabulary to express this grief but uses repetition (very very very) and phrases probably expressed by the adults ('lived for 60 years with him') for emphasis.

On the basis of this kind of detailed analysis of the pieces, Wilkinson and his colleagues conclude that seven-year-olds on the whole do not express feelings in their writing but are quite matter-of-fact about the most horrific of experiences. Again, while seven-year-olds mostly can mention other people, over half give no indication of their attitude towards them; only five in the sample gave the direct speech of others (A2.2);

only two (including Jean) showed awareness of the feelings of others. There is a range of indications of reader-awareness; some show none at all, while others will give the reader some orientation and background explanation. Mostly there is very little description of the setting (A3.1) and the treatment on the whole is literal.

Among ten-year-olds, Wilkinson's team found a tendency for over half the sample to make the feelings of the writer explicit although there are still difficulties in expressing emotion. Here Jessica has trouble in finding adequate words to express her feelings about an accident to her brother:

"One day my brother went to dartmoor and a rock fell on his leg and he broke it and we had to take him to plymouth hospital to have plaster on his leg and Mrs.Snedden was with him and Mr. Woodford took christopher home and Mrs.Snedden and christopher was home again and Mr.Woodford carryed christopher indoor and Mrs.Snedden took his stuf in door and mum said to me and carol go to bed to sleep good night mum".

There is very little expression of emotion, no setting of the scene and little attempt to explain things to the reader.

However, other ten-year-olds are capable of describing personalities:

"One day I was pick up a pot of jam and my Gramar said Oh Sharon it is to havey for you but I was still happy Sharon it is time for bed good night Sharon good night".

The grandmother comes to life, say the team, 'through her supervision of Sharon and her peremptory bedtime orders' (ibid, p.54). The team discovered a development in the ability to express feelings about the self, but still a problem in realising the characters of other people. Far more than seven-year-olds, the ten-year-olds give enough information for the reader to understand their themes and make great use of the environment to create atmosphere and establish the nature of social relationships. No ten-year-

old gives 'symbolic significance' to their pieces and the language is generally literal.

Finally, the sample of thirteen-year-olds show considerably more awareness of their own and others' feelings and intentions, One describes being lost:

"I looked like a fool asking where Room 1 was"
 "This bed was a cot which I was very put out by
 because I thought I had grown out of cots".

Yet another shows a sensitive understanding of the subtlety and complexity of mourning:

"I long for the day when I can think about him without
 it hurting too much I'll just put on a brave face, its
 all I can do".

The pieces tend to be context-free, contain information for the reader to understand the background to the account, and even contain asides to the reader. They can also use the environment very effectively to convey emotion. They are more likely to interpret rather than simply describe.

What Wilkinson and his team conclude is that the results of the Crediton Project indicate that it is possible to make a fairly objective analysis of affective development as expressed in the writing of seven, ten and thirteen-year old children. The emphasis in their study is on 'decentring' of self, and a growing awareness of other people. They note the great difference between speech with its gestures, inflections, intonation and face-to-face interaction, and writing where children have to rely on stylistic devices to convey feeling.

The Crediton Project certainly gives useful guidelines for researchers and teachers to use in their analysis of what children are trying to achieve in their imaginative and autobiographical writing. However, although it is closely based on Piaget's stages of development, the team unfortunately does

not acknowledge the recent criticisms (Donaldson, 1978) of Piaget's ideas especially when applied to the social world of the child. (These ideas have already been discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis) Neither does Wilkinson acknowledge the research by psychologists in social cognition or the stimulating ideas of researchers in the Harvard Project Zero, particularly the work by Winner (1982) on children's use of metaphor.

Furthermore, the research focuses only on the end-product and gives nothing of the intentions of the child. Thus although the seven-year-olds do not on the whole express much feeling in their writing, it would be interesting to find out from the children what they would have written if they had a wider range of writing skills available.

In sheer terms of numbers, the largest study of writing abilities is the survey carried out by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU), a project based at the University of London Institute of Education and financed by the Social Science Research Council. The APU was set up in 1974 with the general objective of promoting 'the development of methods of assessing and monitoring the achievement of children at school, and to seek to identify the incidence of under-achievement', as set out in the DES White Paper (1974). So far four reports have been produced by the APU (two primary and two secondary), which focus on the language performance in reading and writing of pupils in England, Wales and N.Ireland at 11 and 15. The size of the samples is huge. For example, in the Primary Survey Report No.2 (1982,p.6) it is stated that 'some 9,850 primary pupils in 691 schools participated: approximately 6,650 in England, 1,800 in Wales and 1,400 in N.Ireland. Of these, around 5,600 completed tests in reading, 3,400 tests in writing and 850 took tests linking reading and writing'. (For the purposes of this thesis I focus mainly

on the writing tasks designed for the primary survey of 11-year-olds).

The research team argue that, since no one test could adequately assess writing abilities, they attempted to produce forms of assessment which would be relevant to the wide variety of types of writing produced by children in response to different instructions and for different audiences. They hoped to move away from the model of pupil to teacher-as-examiner. However, despite this laudable aim, inevitably because of the size of the sample and the constraints of a survey of this type, the APU team admit that the actual contexts in which the children wrote did not provide genuine audiences or communication with anyone other than an examiner. As Rosen (1982,p.34) in his critique of the APU survey points out, 'it is the tester's needs which cause the greatest problems'. The research team encouraged teachers to introduce the writing tasks appropriately and allow discussions before the children wrote but the writing was still done under test conditions where it could not be assumed that the children would be in the frame of mind which would enable them to produce their best writing.

The APU team proposed to assess the 11-year-olds with reference to the following categories:

- 1) Personal response to music, pictures, poetry
- 2) An autobiographical narrative
- 3) A fictional story
- 4) A description in which the pupil expresses feelings about the description
- 5) An account about something the pupil has read
- 6) An accurate description of something the pupil has observed
- 7) An account of how the pupil plans to carry out a task.

In addition, attitudes to writing were measured by a questionnaire. Scripts were marked both impressionistically and analytically with reference to the following criteria:

1. Content and organisation
2. Appropriateness and style

3. Grammatical conventions
4. Orthographic conventions

Unfortunately, despite the range of tasks given to the pupils, the analysis of the data is narrow and focuses more on grammar and spelling than on the content of what the children write or their cognitive and emotional processes as they write.

Rosen's (1982) comments underline the missed opportunities of the APU survey. He writes (ibid,p.40-41), for example, on the analysis of narratives:

"The role of dialogue in story-telling is of great interest. How do children manage it ? What do they make it do for them? The Report dwells on dialogue in the stories, but not to answer questions of this order. It limits itself instead to the safer territory of the punctuation of dialogue"

Similarly, responses to the questionnaire are treated more quantitatively than qualitatively, with the result that the conclusions beg many more questions than they answer.

The result of the questionnaire suggest that:

- 1) Enjoyment in writing is synonymous with creation of a story
- 2) Anxiety about writing is focused on exercises
- 3) Sex differences are found in relation to extended writing with girls appearing more confident and fluent than boys
- 4) Boys have less eclectic tastes in writing than girls and these cluster round factual writing.

The team conclude overall that in their sample:

- a) 96% have obtained sufficient control of writing to be understood at first reading.
- b) 95% have some knowledge of how sentences are separated or related.
- c) 15% had numerous errors - i.e. one spelling mistake in each line and one grammatical mistake in each three lines.
- d) 15% were well in command of spelling and grammar conventions.

However, it is a disappointingly thin conclusion considering the wealth of material which must have been gathered. The general experience of reading the Report is a frustrating one since so little of the children's

writing experience comes through.

Furthermore, as Rosen (ibid,p.44) points out:

"Though we may see the team locked in an heroic struggle with the tiger of assessment, we must also see that they should not have ventured on the jungle safari in the first place. There is an alternative; it is the active participation of teachers in assessment, teachers who are close to the children being assessed".

With this criticism in mind, it seems appropriate to turn to a radically different approach to children's writing - the observational study in a New Hampshire school of children in the class-room over a two-year period.

Studies of Child Control of the Writing Process

Building on Emig's studies of children's composing processes and their feelings about writing, Graves (1973) began his own observations of Michael, a seven-year-old, as he wrote in class over a four month period. Graves recorded Michael's progress in the context of other class-room activities and the work of his classmates. He concluded that in order to understand the writing process, the researcher needs to study the life of the child, the particular episode which he is writing about and the context within which the episode occurs. He argued that even at such an early age, writing has many aspects and is a complex phenomenon unique to each child.

Graves is critical of research which focuses on an end-product which is analysed out of context. To him, writing is a craft. If we give children responsibility for their own writing we will find that they experience it as a process of rehearsing, drafting and revising (Graves,1981a). The challenge which Graves (1981b,pp.496-497) throws at researchers is:

"Slow down, look at the full context of writing, involve teachers, and get to know the full potential of children and teachers".

What may at first glance seem to be a dull piece can be perceived quite differently when seen in context. As he writes (1981a):

"There is much for children to learn to control in writing that is very different than (sic) speech. They must supply the context, write in a certain direction, learn to control the space-time dimensions of writing on a flat surface, understand what the medium of writing can do, know the relation between sound and symbols, know how to make the symbols, learn to put symbols in a particular order, and while composing one operation, understand its relation to the entire order of what has been and will be in the message, and compose in a medium where the audience is not usually present".
(p.19)

In other words, in order to write, even the youngest child has had to solve a complex range of problems. Yet despite the difficulties, Graves (1979) suggests that most children "have a natural urge to express, to make marks, to 'play' with writing, to experiment boldly with new ways to put messages on paper" (p.2). He claims, in fact, that children spontaneously want to make sense out of written language and to build their own models of how writing works from their on-going encounters with print. Thus he argues strongly that research must focus on contexts and on children as they write.

In the pioneering New Hampshire Study (Graves, Calkins and Sowers, 1978-80), the research team investigated the following aspects of writing:

Observations at regular intervals of children as they wrote,

the writing episode. The research team observed both page and child as he or she wrote and recorded any speech and gestures which accompanied the writing.

the life of the child. The team interviewed children and teachers to gain useful background information, e.g. the child's concept of good writing; the drawings which preceded the writing; the range of themes which the child explored; the kinds of characters which peopled stories;

strategies used to solve technical problems; the sources of ideas; the transition from oral to written speech. ethnographic context. The literary interests of teachers, parents and other children; the existence of lines of communication from child to community.

The members of the research team moved right into the class-room in order to study 16 children intensively over a two-year period. They collected all the children's writing and frequently video-taped the children as they wrote and as they discussed or shared their writing with others.

Primarily the aim was to help teachers to create the kind of class-room community within which writing would flourish. Thus the results are presented in a case-study way. There are no statistical analyses of data but instead painstaking observations of the subjects on many occasions.

Essentially Graves' view is that it is revision, redrafting and rewriting which creates real writing. He argues that the young child, like the accomplished author, should learn to view a piece as a draft which can be worked on and improved. The key to this is 'ownership'; the child should feel that he or she has control over the writing, and that the voice that is being expressed is an authentic, personal one.

From this it follows that, where possible, the child should be encouraged to write about topics of interest to him or her, not topics imposed by the teacher.

Graves (1983) writes, "Teachers who attend to voice listen to the person in the piece". (p.227)

The concept of the 'conference' which grew out of the New Hampshire Study, refers to the short interview between teacher and

children where sensitive, concerned questions are asked and where the young writers are enabled to express more effectively the meanings which they intend to convey. The important thing about the conference is that the teacher follows the child. As a result of his observations of many conferences, Graves recommends the teacher to:

ask questions they think the child can answer,
help the child to focus; and give the child space and
time to find his or her own voice.

The technique, it seems to me, owes much to the client-centred techniques of therapists like Carl Rogers. Here is an example of a conference (Graves, 1983 pp.100-101):

Conference One

Ms.Jacobs: How is the writing going Rodney?

Rodney: OK

Ms.Jacobs: Tell me what your piece is about. (The teacher deliberately lets Rodney keep his paper and chat about it)

Rodney: Well, it's about my dog, Nicky. He's pretty loud.

Ms.Jacobs: So he makes a lot of noise and bothers you?

Rodney: Yeah, he barks like crazy. Sometimes it bothers me but the bad part is the neighbors don't like it.

Ms.Jacobs: The neighbors are upset?

Rodney: They've called the police a couple of times. But the dog can't help it. He was beaten when he was little. That's before we got him. We don't beat him. But that's why he barks so much.

Ms.Jacobs: Sort of makes you wonder what will happen next. What can you do?

Rodney: Well, you can't beat him some more. We could put a muzzle on but that's cruel.

Ms.Jacobs: And you've been writing about all of this?

Rodney: Most of it.

Ms.Jacobs: Is there anything you need help with?

Rodney: I think I'm okay.

Ms.Jacobs: (Final receiving goes here)

Through the one-to-one meetings between teacher and child, where the teacher is in the role of learner about the information which the writer wishes to impart, the young author discovers how to value what he or she knows and how to express in his or her own voice. The conference, claims Graves, is also the place where the mechanics of writing can be most effectively taught - as the need for punctuation, spelling and readable hand-writing is felt by the writers themselves.

The child's sense of audience is another focus of the New Hampshire Study. Graves and his colleagues noticed that the youngest writers wrote for themselves but gradually moved towards the idea of writing for an audience. The team also showed how small groups of children can facilitate one another's writing, through the exchange of ideas in the pre-writing stage, but also when they play the part of audience and 'receive' one another's pieces. This too helps in the move away from egocentrism as children learn respect for a variety of views and interpretations of experiences.

Finally, Graves stresses the importance of writing by the teacher since it is by doing this that teachers discover how variable the writing process is and how vulnerable the writer is when sharing thoughts and feelings with others. Teachers as writers can discover for themselves strategies for overcoming writer's block, methods of free writing, revision and editing. The teachers in the New Hampshire study found value in expressing their own 'voice' through writing in a community.

The project has generated many ideas for researchers, and teachers, though possibly it has had more impact in the U.S.A. where there has been less of a tradition of creativity in school. The key point is that Graves listened to the teachers instead of coming

to the school with a pre-planned research design. The teachers in turn slowed down the process of teaching in order to 'listen' for the children's intentions to emerge. Furthermore, he emphasises children's uniqueness rather than their similarities. As he concludes:

"As the study has gone on, we have become more fascinated with the differences in children than in their similarities. This is what happens when we slow down, listen and let the children lead. That is the joy of both research and teaching". (Graves, 1981a)

Structure in children's narratives

This last approach concerns not so much the content as the structure of narratives written by children. Since Bartlett (1932) in his work on story-recall observed that narratives have identifiable patterns, there have been numerous studies of narrative structure in play, and in stories told and written by children. Furthermore, recent studies (Galda, 1984) indicate that children's play in a narrative mode (socio-dramatic play) may underlie the development of the narrative competence that is the ability to construct a story which combines a suitable setting with characters who respond to a central problem through a sequence of events which move to a logical conclusion. Gardner (1980) too notes patterns of narrative structure in children's dramatic play since, by the age of four, children can differentiate between the voices of narrator and character. "Now I will crash my car" is spoken in a different tone of voice from "Help!". Furthermore, by the age of four, children's play often includes a central problem which is worked out logically through a sequence of events. Applebee (1978) as described in Chapter 2, attempts structural analysis of whole stories. Others, (Botvin and Sutton-Smith, 1977)

see children's narratives as a series of events which happen in a predictable way. These they call 'plot units' and they suggest a developmental sequence from the use of primary plot units or elements which represent both the impetus for action and the resolution to the use of secondary plot units or elements which mediate between the initial primary plot unit (the impetus for action) and the final primary plot unit (the resolution of the action). In their argument, primary plot units delimit the action of a story and always occur in pairs, forming dyads, and they write (ibid, p.379):

"Increasing structural complexity has been conceived in terms of the articulation and the hierarchical organisation of nuclear dyads as well as the integration of intermediary elements (secondary plot units) between the initial and final terms of the nuclear dyad".

Still other researchers (Glenn,1978; Mandler and Johnson,1977; Stein and Glenn,1979) focus on episodes in stories, and see the story as consisting of 'problem-solving episodes' which either follow one another sequentially or are embedded in other episodes. Mandler and Johnson (1977) postulate that a story contains two categories: the SETTING and the EPISODE. The setting introduces and describes the social, physical and cultural context of the story; the episode contains a number of categories which are related to one another. For example, in the story quoted in Stein and Goldman (1981) the first three sentences convey SETTING information and the rest is the EPISODE.

"This story is about a boy named John who lives in the city. John is nine years old. He lives in an apartment with his mother and father.
One day, John's best friend, Paul, didn't want to play with John. John felt sad and lonely and wanted Paul to play with him. John knew how much Paul liked ice-cream. So John bought an ice-cream cone for Paul. Then John said 'You can have this ice-cream cone if you will play with me'. Paul said, Okay! John and Paul played together all afternoon and they both had a good time".

In this story, the authors suggest, the conflict is interpersonal and the resolution comes from John's attempt to persuade Paul to play with him. They identify five syntactic categories which occur in the EPISODE:

initiating event:	a change in the story environment established in the SETTING. Here John's friend does not want to play with him; this leads John to have the goal of wanting his friend to play.
internal response:	the emotional reaction, sadness and loneliness.
attempt:	John buys an ice-cream cone as an attempt to resolve the problem.
consequence:	this attempt succeeds; the goal is attained.
reaction:	how the protagonists respond to the consequence. Here 'they both had a good time'.

Stein and Goldman (1981) consider this kind of story to be grammatically well formed and logically coherent. They in turn asked children (10 boys and 10 girls at each of the ages, 6, 9 & 12) to produce a story in which they were the main character and had a particular goal, (that is to be friendly) and achieved the consequence (that is, succeeded in being a friend to someone). Subsequently, the researchers asked probe questions about the stories which provided information about:

- the main character
- the role of other characters
- aspects of the environment.

As a result, Stein and Goldman were able to identify the following categories of information about problem solving in friendship

situations:

The hero/heroine states:	physical, affective/emotional, situational, attitudinal.
The roles played by others:	role of parent and family; role of friends; role of people outside family and friendship systems.
The role played by the environment:	availability of person to be friendly with; availability of a basis for friendship (e.g. common hobby); availability of a common location.

Stein and Goldman found that the knowledge base for friendship does change with age. The two groups of older children included information about common location and common interests as a basis for friendship interaction; the 12-year-olds alone also included information about the main character's situational state and indicated their awareness that friendship may, for example, conflict with a person's independence. The youngest children might indicate that they played with another child but showed no awareness of the need to have interests in common.

In summary, what most older children knew about friendship was found to be in addition to what most younger children knew, and the authors suggest that the acquisition of this knowledge is systematic.

The conclusion of their study goes beyond an analysis of children's knowledge of friendship. The authors suggest that the episodic structure of events is a common link among research efforts in story-telling, social-cognitive development and social-skill training. In other words, by using this particular approach

to the analysis of the children's stories, they conclude that the child's knowledge of problem-solving in social situations is the source of the child's comprehension of both stories and real-life social events.

Although the story-grammar approach is quite different from other approaches which focus more on the manifest content of what the child writes, it is interesting to make connections with other research findings, especially in relation to the child's perception of the social world as expressed through the medium of narrative.

Furthermore, children use conventions to mark their narratives, such as formal beginnings, formal endings, use of past tense, use of a special story voice as well as the use of stock characters and events.

It is out of these basic conventions that later evolve more elaborate strategies for creating a convincing narrative, and again there are clear developmental trends. Even the two-year-olds in Applebee's (1978) study included some conventions in the majority of their stories and their use increased consistently with age.

The research studies indicate how the structural analysis of stories can complement studies which focus on content. Each approach indicates developmental changes in the ways in which children understand events and characters drawn from real life or fiction.

As Peterson and McCabe (1983) write:

"We reveal ourselves directly or indirectly through all our narratives, polishing those we deem the best - either the clearest windows to our true selves or the most effective shutters over the same, depending upon our personality. Either way, this self-revelation begins with the narratives we tell as children".

(pp.216-217)

The important point for the purposes of this thesis is that the structural analysis of narratives has the potential for producing models which account for developmental and individual differences in the understanding of social interaction, whether this takes place in real life or in stories.

CHAPTER 4

Implications of Writing Research for the Present Study.

The studies described in Chapter 3 indicate at least some of the breadth of recent research into the growth of writing abilities. One of the difficulties of categorising these studies has been the lack of general theories of writing development and the range of disciplines - psychology, English, linguistics, education - from which the studies are drawn. Some cross-fertilisation has occurred but there are still barriers between disciplines. For example, some studies are influenced by psychologists, notably by the psycho-analysts, by Kelly and by Vygotsky; yet Wilkinson, an educationist, can state (Kroll and Wells, 1983,p.46):

"In contrast to what occurs with cognition, there is no coherent body of theory concerned with the growth of affect. Apparently, psychologists will not admit to even knowing what an emotion is".

He shows no indication that he has read any of the growing psychological literature on social cognition and social sensitivity, or that he has heard of the research into the imagination by psychologists in the Harvard Project Zero, all of which is directly relevant to his theme.

From the perspective of the psychologist, then, and aware that I probably over-simplify ideas from other disciplines, I would suggest that it is possible to distinguish three broad categories of writing research; these are shown in Table 5:

Table 5 Three categories of writing research

1. Descriptive studies which focus on writers themselves, their emotional problems and search for self and their search for personal meaning.

<u>Approach</u>	<u>Examples</u>
i) Therapeutic/remedial case-studies	Freud Holbrook, Hourd and Cooper
ii) Many autographical accounts by authors	Solzhenitzyn Robert Graves
iii) Accounts by teachers of creative writing	Dixon, Creber, Ted Hughes
2. <u>Research studies which focus on the writing process and on the writer/audience relationship.</u>	

<u>Approach</u>	<u>Examples</u>
i) Composing processes, in which the subjects talk as they write.	Emig
ii) The child's sense of audience: the effect of context; the function of the writing	Britton and his colleagues; Mallett and Newsome
iii) The writing community; the effect of the child/teacher conference	Graves Clay

3. Research which focuses on the end-product

<u>Approach</u>	<u>Examples</u>
i) Monitoring standards of literacy	The A.P.U. Survey
ii) Assessing cognitive and affective development in writing	Wilkinson and his colleagues on the Crediton Project
iii) Analysing structure	Mandler and Johnson; Stein and Glenn; Kroll and Anson

The first category supplies useful, descriptive insights into writing processes of particular individuals but, for the reasons given in Chapter 3, is only indirectly relevant to the present thesis. On the whole the writers in this category give highly personal, interpretative, evaluations of what adults or children mean when they write imaginatively but they lack the rigour which is expected of research.

The second category provides more systematic studies of individual children or groups of children. This category of research explores the particular context which a writer needs if fluency is to be achieved and meaning expressed. It attempts to explore the complex relationship between writer, audience and writing environment, and plots the shift by children from ego-centrism to a concern for the perspective of the reader. Graves' work in particular explores the effect of a writing community on the writing abilities of young children and the importance of the dialogue established in conferences for the establishment of trust in the other which, he claims, is essential for writing which expresses the child's voice. Although this type of research uses small numbers of subjects and is limited in the extent to which broad generalisations can be drawn from it, it does provide a useful perspective on development in children as writers. The findings are rich in observations, pupil-teacher dialogues, and ongoing thoughts in children as they write or plan. These studies tend to 'ring true' to teachers because of the authenticity of the settings and the perceptiveness of the researchers who are often experienced as teachers of writing themselves. One of the most influential researchers in this category has been Britton whose developmental model differentiated 'transactional' and 'poetic' writing modes each with a common origin in the 'expressive' mode. His ideas have had enormous influence on educational practice in this country and he has encouraged teachers to make a shift from the transactional type of writing so predominant in the secondary school curriculum (Britton et al, 1975; Bullock Report, 1975) to the personal, poetic type of writing which, he claims, fosters

personal growth and sensitivity to others, and also helps writers understand experiences more fully.

However, criticisms have been made of Britton's model (Griffiths and Wells, 1983); (Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan, 1980) and it is likely that his two-fold distinction between the transactional and the poetic may be an over-simplification. Griffiths and Wells (1983), for example, studying adult writing, noticed a great variability in their subjects' use of informal, expressive writing as an aid to thinking for both transactional and poetic purposes and question whether Britton's two categories are mutually exclusive. Clearly more rigorous testing of these ideas needs to be carried out.

Even more than Britton, Graves relies heavily on case-study material, despite the fairly large number of children in his sample. By the nature of his approach, which is deliberately not to interfere with normal class-room activities or with the writing development of individual children, Graves' data cannot be subjected to experimentally rigorous analysis; it is difficult to compare one child with another. His assertions about the value of giving the child control of the writing process, for example, are supported by observations of individual children as they write and, by the richness of his own experience as teacher. So, he can claim: (Graves, 1981a).

"Children will continually surprise us if we let them. As in Amy's case, when everyone seems to fit a pattern. If we look carefully, many do not. This may seem to lessen the importance of growth patterns across children. I think it heightens their importance ... This is what happens when we slow down, listen and let the children lead. That is the joy of both research and teaching".

My own observations in the New Hampshire Summer Writing Programme indicate

that many teachers respond with enthusiasm to Graves' ideas but psychologists would tend to be more cautious in accepting such statements in the absence of scientific evidence. To be fair to researchers in this category Britton and his colleagues did attempt a large-scale study in which they tested specific hypotheses about sense of audience and writing functions in the secondary school, but some questions still remain unanswered. Do we really know that by expressing themselves through personal and poetic writing modes, children come to understand themselves and others more fully? If this does occur, does the writing achieve it or is it part of a developmental process which is happening anyway? How effective is the 'conference' compared to more traditional methods? What precisely is 'voice'?

Perhaps, despite Graves' misgivings about objective research methods, we need to complement the intensive observations with research from the third category where the focus is on the end-product. In fact, the analyses of written products from a number of perspectives have produced a great deal of research over the years. The most common design for research of this type has involved giving children of different ages the same writing task and then comparing the results. This can be done by assessing standards of literacy (A.P.U.,1982), by evaluating levels of affect or sensitivity to others (Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan,1980) or by analysing structural properties of narratives. From these cross-sectional studies, generalisations can be made about childrens' emotional and cognitive development as expressed in writing which give more power to the observations of researchers in category 2.

Probably elements from all three categories are to be found in the ways in which we assess children's story writing. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical correctness are still considered to be important by parents, teachers and by young writers themselves; style and literary effect can be evaluated; so too can the level of a writer's social awareness and sensitivity to feelings in self and others; there are also techniques for analysing the complexity of structure in a child's story. At the same time, much of the research described so far points to the importance of the thoughts and feelings which the child brings to the writing context and which are an essential part of the very act of writing itself.

Many of the researchers indicate that children seem to use language not only to communicate information but also to gain in understanding of social relationships and to structure knowledge of the environment. In addition, most present-day researchers seem to be aware that the end-product is only a part of a highly complex process in which the writer is trying to establish links between external, communicative language on the one hand and thought on the other. In Vygotsky's words:(1934,pp 119-153)

"Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic, shifting,unstable thing fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less firmly delineated components of verbal thought".

Britton would claim that the young writer seems to be structuring the web of meaning rather than simply searching for words which reflect a happening. The experimental psychologist would search for a more precise formulation.

The problem which faces the psychologist who studies writing is

how to retain the 'respectability' of traditional methodology without losing the quality of the imaginative data which is being studied. The creative work of children cannot readily be compressed into quantitative categories yet this does not mean that the task is impossible. Similar difficulties face researchers in areas such as psychiatry, anthropology and history who have had to find objective ways of categorising evidence which comes in the form of interviews, diaries, letters and case-notes while still retaining the richness of the sources.

The present study

In the present study an attempt has been made to link the writers themselves with the stories which they wrote. This has been done in the following way as shown in Table 6:

Table 6. The Design of the Present Study

<u>Piece of writing</u>	<u>Writer</u>
(1) Social sensitivity measures were elicited from two stories written by each child in the sample; comparisons were made between children on the basis of age and sex concerning their level of social sensitivity and their sense of audience	The children were interviewed about the specific stories and about writing in general
(2) Stories were analysed for structure	The children were interviewed about their writing in order to elicit views on the concept of story and problems in structuring a story

While I did not go so far as Graves and his team in actually observing writing in the class-room, I did become very involved in the school and spent a great deal of time (over a period of two years) interacting informally with the children before interviewing them. In addition, the teachers themselves administered the writing tasks to avoid any effect which a new adult might have on the writing of the children. The responses which I got from the children seemed to me to be authentic. I feel that I came to be a trusted adult for many of them. At the same time, I used objective frameworks based on the work of Wilkinson on the one hand and Mandler and Johnson on the other to analyse the stories which the children produced.

Method

a) Subjects. A total of 113 children ranging in age from 7.5 years to 11.8 years served as subjects: these were all the pupils in the four classes of a junior school in outer London. One of the staff had been given responsibility for language in the school; both she and her colleagues were active in creating an environment which encouraged all the children to develop an interest in books, writing and performing plays, sharing stories written by one another, writing poetry and listening to it. The children came from a range of middle-class and working-class backgrounds. Numbers of children in the four classes are as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 The number of children in each of the four junior school classes of the present study

	<u>Age range</u>	<u>Number</u>
Class 1	7 years, 10 mths - 8 yrs, 8 mths.	29
Class 2	8 " 8 " - 9 " 8 "	27
Class 3	9 " 6 " - 10 " 8 "	27
Class 4	10 " 8 " - 11 " 8 "	30

b) Measures

1. Two writing tasks
2. The Burt Reading Test
3. The N.F.E.R. English Attainment Test
4. An interview with each child (see Appendix 1)

c) Procedure

1. The writing tasks were kept constant by setting the same topic for all children. These were Flight - a theme which was open to wide interpretation - and When I was very Frightened - a theme chosen to focus on a real experience. The purpose of the study was fully explained to the staff both by letter (see Appendix 2) and in staff-room discussions. In order to combat the possible effects of audience awareness on the children's writings the teachers were asked to integrate the topics into normal creative writing sessions and it was only after the stories had been written that the children were told that a researcher would be reading them. This procedure was similar to that adopted by Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan, (1980) in their study of children's use of affect in stories. Standard instructions concerning the introduction of the two titles were given to the teachers. (Appendix 3)
2. Measures of reading ability (the Burt Reading Test) and academic achievement (the NFER English Attainment Test) were obtained from school records.
3. I went into each class and explained my interest in children's writing and my wish to interview each child about the stories. The children responded with enthusiasm. Subsequently the discussions with each child took place in the Poetry

Corner, a pleasant, book-lined alcove in the resource area. Care was taken to put the children at their ease and many informal conversations about reading and writing were also held with children during breaks. The confidentiality of each interview was assured.

Results

The results are presented in the following four chapters. In Chapter 5 I examine the themes which emerged in the stories as well as age and sex differences in the contexts which the children chose; patterns in the children's use of characterisation are also described. In Chapter 6, I investigate developmental trends in the expression of social sensitivity in main characters, other characters, child's sense of audience and use of environment; the relationship between social sensitivity scores and reading age on the one hand and attainment on the other is also investigated. Chapter 7 focuses on the concepts of story which the children revealed in response to the interview. Finally, in Chapter 8, I make a structural analysis of the stories using a version of the story grammar method.

Two judges were used to check the reliability of scoring procedures. These were Dr. Dilys Davies, a clinical psychologist, and Dr. Isabel Finlayson, an educational psychologist; each was experienced in research methods.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES, CONTEXTS AND CHARACTERS

Themes

The theme Flight was deliberately chosen since it offered the children wide scope in interpretation.

Table 8 indicates the variety of topics which were explored in the stories.

Escape stories occurred most frequently (33%) and could be subdivided into escapes from fantasy figures, such as monsters and witches, (19%) and escapes from realistic characters like strange men. (13%) Space themes were also popular, especially with boys. (22% of the stories were adventures in space or mid-air). 19% of the writers imagined what it would be like to fly in the air, whether as a kite, a bird or a caterpillar emerging from the chrysalis; while another group (7%) wrote about hang-gliding or learning to fly an aeroplane. 11% of the children gave realistic accounts of holiday journeys by aeroplane, usually in the company of family. The rest were isolated topics which did not easily fit into the broad categories. For example, Paul (aged 11) was the only child to write about a dart flight. Corinne, also 11, and a frequent absentee from school, was the only writer to describe running away from home with her boyfriend.

The themes of When I was very Frightened reflected the typical fears of childhood. Most frequent were accounts of waking up alone in the night and being scared. Other accounts were of being separated from parents in the market or in a department store; some described frightening incidents in which the child had been followed by a menacing adult or been bullied by a gang of children.

Table 8. The choice of themes for story title "Flight".

Theme	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3		Class 4		No.	%
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls		
Space/air adventure	3	-	8	1	6	2	4	1	25	22.12
Escape from a fantasy enemy(e.g. witch, monster, speaking animals)	-	1	2	1	7	5	2	4	22	19.47
Escape from a realistic enemy (e.g. sinister stranger, tough boys)	-	-	-	2	-	-	5	8	15	13.27
Holiday by plane	2	4	1	-	2	3	-	-	12	10.62
Hang-gliding/ Learning to fly/ Ballooning	2	1	2	1	-	1	1	-	8	7.08
Being a bird/a kite/ a caterpillar	1	9	5	4	-	-	2	-	21	18.59
Flying a kite	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3.54
Running away from home	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	0.88
Flight of animals to new home	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1.77
Description of comet	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.77
Following a dart flight	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	0.88
	11	18	18	9	15	12	15	15	113	

Contexts

While reading the stories I noticed wide variations in the choice of environment or context in which the events took place. In order to see if regular patterns could be observed, I categorised the two stories for context in the following way (Table 9) on a four-point scale:

Table 9 Contexts of stories categorised on a four-point scale

<u>Score</u>	<u>Context</u>
1	the narrative takes place at home, e.g. in the kitchen or the bathroom.
2	the narrative takes place in the immediate local environment, for example, out at play.
3	the narrative takes place some distance from home but the child is in the company of the family, for example, on holiday, at a fair, in Majorca with parents.
4	the narrative takes place far from home, without parents, for example, in Brazil on the run from police, out in space, in the jungle.

(Inter-judge agreement was 0.96 with Dr. Davies, a clinical psychologist and researcher, as independent rater)

It was decided to analyse the two stories separately since in one the theme was a real one (When I was very frightened) and in the other the theme could be imaginary (Flight) depending on how the child interpreted the title. For the stories entitled When I was very frightened, there were no examples of category 4 (for obvious reasons). In Flight, as it happened, the children set their stories in categories 2,3 and 4 and did not use category 1.

The chi-squared test was done for each age level by context category on the two stories. (Tables 10 and 11)

Table 10 The context of the story entitled "When I was very Frightened" by age of child.

	<u>Context</u>			
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Class 1	15	13	1	-
Class 2	20	6	1	-
Class 3	21	2	4	-
Class 4	14	12	4	-
	70	33	10	-
				113

$$\chi^2 = 15.34, df = 6, p < 0.02$$

Table 11 Context of the story entitled "Flight" by age of child

	<u>Context</u>			
	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Class 1	-	13	11	5
Class 2	-	15	3	9
Class 3	-	6	8	13
Class 4	-	9	11	10
	-	43	33	37
				113

$$\chi^2 = 13.25, df = 6, p < 0.05$$

There are differences by age in the settings where children place their stories,

The results suggest that as children get older their choice of context is one further away from home. As far as the account of a real experience goes, this is to be expected since as children get older their range of experience normally takes them outside the home base.

The imaginative stories, too, reflect this trend, except that, in addition, the children have the option of choosing a setting which they have not actually experienced themselves. Here again, the older children are more likely to choose settings which are outside the family home environment. This partly reflects their own widening social environment and the vicarious experiences which they gain from reading, watching television and listening to the adventures of other people. Partly, too, it could be said to reflect the children's increasing capacity to distance themselves not only in the sense of taking the perspective of other people but also in travelling in the imagination beyond the confines of the immediate environment.

In order to see if there were any sex differences in this trend, a chi-squared test was done for boys and girls in each class for the two stories (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12 Context of "When I was very frightened" chosen by boys and girls at each age level

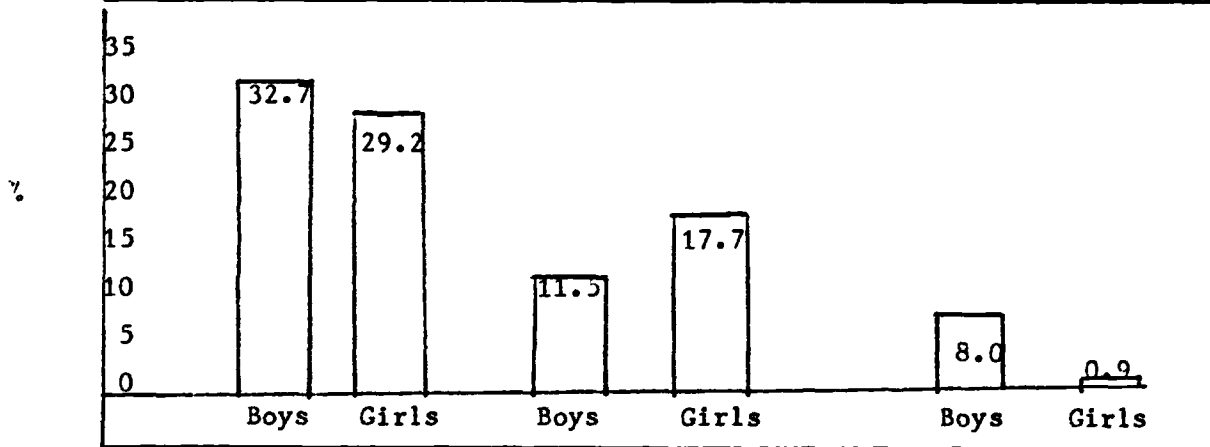
Class 1	$\chi^2 = 3.341$	df = 2	p = 0.188	NS
Class 2	$\chi^2 = 0.525$	df = 2	p = 0.7691	NS
Class 3	$\chi^2 = 2.748$	df = 2	p = 0.253	NS
Class 4	$\chi^2 = 5.333$	df = 2	p = 0.0695	NS

It appears that when children are writing about a real experience there are no significant differences between boys and girls in choice of setting. As stated before, no one chose category 4.

The majority (boys 36.6%; girls 50%) set their accounts of a frightening experience in contexts 1 and 2, that is, at home or in the neighbourhood. Although it did not reveal statistical significance, there is an interesting trend in the patterns of choices. Boys are slightly more likely to be frightened at home; their most common choice, in fact, was being scared at night in bed. Girls are more likely than boys to be frightened in the immediate neighbourhood; one quite common experience is being frightened by a stranger. The histogram (Figure 6) illustrates this trend.

Figure 6

Percentage of boys and girls in each context for "When I was very frightened"



Context: Category 1

Category 2

Category 3

However, when it comes to an imaginary story, there are sex differences in choice of context. The story Flight was scored for context on the same 4-point scale and a chi-squared test carried out. (Table 13)

Table 13. Context of "Flight" chosen by boys and girls at each age level

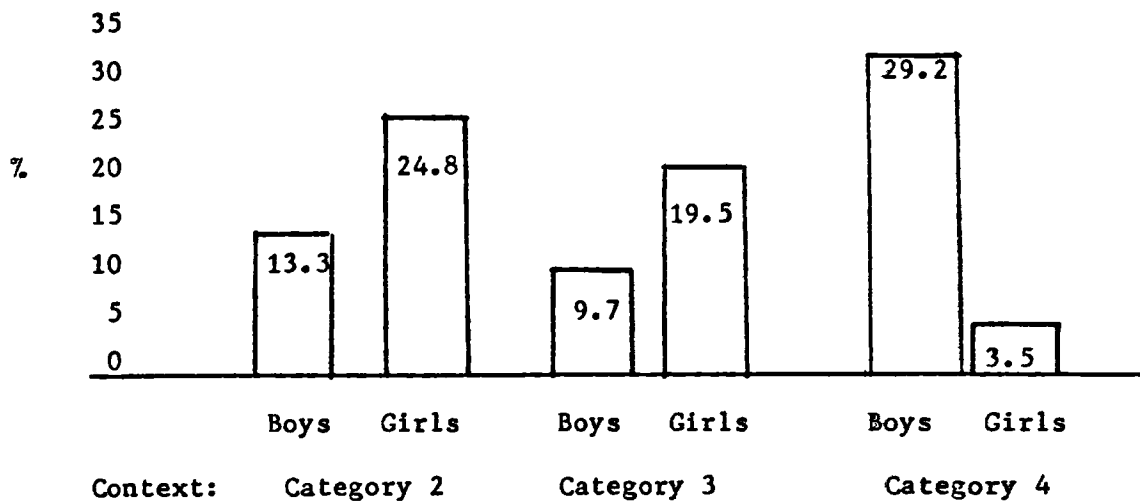
Class 1	$\chi^2 = 9.931$	$df = 2$	$p < 0.007$	*
Class 2	$\chi^2 = 3.20$	$df = 2$	$p = 0.202$	NS
Class 3	$\chi^2 = 12.046$	$df = 2$	$p < 0.002$	+
Class 4	$\chi^2 = 10.966$	$df = 2$	$p < 0.004$	+

The results indicate that boys are significantly more likely to venture further in their stories than girls, except in

Class 2 where the majority of the class is female. The histogram describes this trend. (Figure 7)

Figure 7

Percentage of boys and girls in each context for "flight".



Over half of the girls base their stories near or around home; by contrast, nearly one-third of the boys place their stories in far-off or exotic contexts. Where girls travel away from home (as 19.5% do), they do so in the company of their families.

These differences between real and imaginary experiences for both boys and girls may well parallel children's beliefs about sex-appropriate behaviour and expectations.

Research on children's play (Bruner, Jolly and Sylva, 1976; Grief, 1974) across cultures suggests that the acting out of sex-appropriate roles in sociodramatic play is an important factor in sex-role acquisition and development. Block (1978) argues that the sex-typing of children's interests and attitudes has implications for ways in which children label behaviour as sex-appropriate. In her study of child-rearing practices, she notes the differential socialisation of girls and boys by parents with regard to encouragement of independence and adventurousness. Reinforcing the parents' influence,

teachers, too, seem to play an important part in the establishment of norms concerning male and female behaviour. Byrne, 1978; Fagot 1978; King, 1978) Byrne, for example, writes that in school:

"Girls are praised for being quiet, clean, tidy, helpful; and criticised for being muddy, rough, noisy, lazy, untidy On the other hand, boys are praised for toughness, for strength, for leadership, for organisation, for adult behaviour, for initiative and originality."
(pp 83-83)

Furthermore, teachers are often critical of cross-gender activities (Fagot, 1978) and discourage both boys and girls from behaving in ways which are seen to be inappropriate. The greater adventurousness displayed in the contexts of the story-settings by boys is probably quite consistent with their socialisation experiences. A similar distinction between boys' and girls' perception of character might also be predicted and this is explored in the next section.

Characters

Having examined age and sex differences in choice of themes and contexts, I decided to see whether there were any patterns in the children's use of characters in their narratives. It seemed appropriate to look firstly in a straightforward way at the sheer numbers of characters which children created in their writing at different ages.

The analysis of variance indicated a significant main effect of age on the number of characters portrayed in the two stories written by children ($F = 6.318$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). (Table 14)

Grand Mean = 5.63

Table 14 Mean number of characters in the 2 stories

	Boys	Girls	Total	N
Class 1	4.64	4.61	4.62	29
Class 2	4.89	4.67	4.81	27
Class 3	6.80	6.50	6.67	27
Class 4	5.00	7.80	6.40	30

In the sample as a whole, boys had slightly fewer characters in their stories (Mean = 5.36) than girls (Mean = 5.93) but the analysis did not indicate a main effect of sex ($F = 2.228$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.134$). The fact that there was some interaction effect ($F = 3.167$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.027$) may be due to the discrepancy between boys' and girls' mean scores in Class 4. The boys in the top class showed less interest in reading and writing and this possibly accounts for the interaction effects.

This suggests that, as children get older, they are increasingly more able to handle a variety of characters in their imaginative writing with all the added complexity which this involves. One explanation is that as children get older, they increase their experience of interacting with other people and so are able to draw on a wider range of social relationships for the purposes of story-writing. Thus the increasing number of characters could be seen as a reflection of their wider circle of relationships in real life and their increasing understanding of people's feelings about one another. It is also known that children's reading interests widen with age (Applebee, 1978; Schools Council, 1980 ; Tucker, 1980) which would give them a growing range of characters upon which to draw. But many changes take place during these years some of which are explored further in Chapter 6.

There were no sex differences in the total number of characters devised by the children, but a closer look at the data revealed a discrepancy in the relative numbers of male and female

characters chosen by boys and girls. (Table 15)

Table 15 The number of male and female characters chosen by girls and boys

	Mean number of male characters	Mean number of female characters
Boys	4.27	1.08
Girls	2.00	3.93

For numbers of male characters the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of sex ($F = 44.107$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). The girls had consistently fewer male characters in their stories than the boys at each age-level; there was no interaction effect. (Table 16)

Table 16 Mean numbers of male characters at each age level

	Boys	Girls
Class 1	3.55	1.33
Class 2	3.89	1.11
Class 3	5.07	2.17
Class 4	4.47	3.20

Similarly, the ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of sex on the number of female characters in the stories (Table 17) ($F = 141.489$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$)

Table 17 Mean number of female characters at each age level

	Boys	Girls
Class 1	1.09	3.28
Class 2	1.00	3.56
Class 3	1.73	4.33
Class 4	0.53	4.60

It is clear that the boys at all ages had consistently fewer female characters in their stories than girls, the difference being more striking in Class 4 where the boys had the lowest mean of all. This probably accounts for the interaction effect ($F = 3.129$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.028$) of age and sex.

Research into children's friendship choices (Damon, 1978; Hartup 1970) indicates that between the ages of 7 and 12 children tend to befriend children of the same sex. It would appear, then, that boys seem to have more experience of boys and girls of girls. Thus it is likely that each is going to choose predominantly same-sex characters in stories. Furthermore, these differences between boys and girls could be explained by the tendency to identify with the same-sex characters in stories. Yet how does this account for the fact that the effect is much more pronounced for female characters than for male characters ? The girls favour female characters but not to such an extent as the boys favour male characters. In fact, the children of Class 4 show the difference most strikingly. To the boys, female characters scarcely exist (mean number of female characters = 0.53); to the girls, females are preferred but males are given some presence in their stories. (Mean number of male characters = 3.20)

It was decided to look more closely at the kinds of characteristics which were being assigned to males and females in the stories and to see if there were any differences in the behaviour which they exhibited. The literature on sex-role stereotyping in children's books (Weitzman, Eifler, Holcada and Ross, 1972; Zimet, 1977) suggests that male and female characters tend to be portrayed in a different way; males are much more likely to be in dominant roles, to be brave and to show initiative, while females are passive, timid, lacking in initiative and domesticated. The mass media too reflect cultural values since they contain sex - role models with whom children can identify. (Weitzman, Eifler, Holcada and Ross, 1972). Research shows that generally the sex roles presented to children in books and comics follow traditional stereotyped patterns.

Zimet (1977) in a survey of children's literature, finds a dearth of female characters. Weitzman, Eifler, Holcada and Ross (1972) show that in many books boys outnumber girls by three to one; they suggest that publishers seem to think that only girls will read about a girl but both boys and girls will read about a boy so books about female characters are less saleable commodities.

Sex-role stereotypes are also reflected in humorous comics where male characters can predominate by ten to one (Braman, 1977). On television too the occupations of females tend to follow sex-stereotyped lines (Jennings, Geis and Brown, 1980; Lalor, 1980). Accordingly, the male and female characters in the present study were categorised as active or passive according to a predetermined scheme. Table 18 indicates the criteria which were used.

Table 18 Criteria used to Categorise Story Characters as Active or Passive.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Examples of behaviour in stories</u>
Active	rescues an eaglet from death; poisons someone; cuts a monster up; starts up an aeroplane; attacks; turns people into frogs; tells boys off; conquers fear by thinking of nice things.
Passive	Cries; watches a kite flying; is mentioned but does nothing; is cut up; is stabbed; runs away; calls in brother to beat off a gang of punks; has leg caught in a trap; is a passenger in an aeroplane.

The categorisation was judged independently by Dr. Dilys Davies on a sample of 25% of the stories. Inter-judge agreement was 0.94.

With regard to the number of active male characters portrayed in the stories, the analysis of variance revealed significant main effects of age ($F = 6.378$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$) and sex ($F = 29.128$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$); there was no significant interaction effect ($F = 1.246$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.297$).

(Table 19/20)

Table 19 Mean number of active male characters in each class

	Boys	Girls
Class 1	2.82	0.83
Class 2	2.50	1.00
Class 3	3.67	1.08
Class 4	3.87	2.93

Table 20 Mean number of active male characters by age

Class 1	1.59
Class 2	2.00
Class 3	2.52
Class 4	3.40

$$F = 6.378, df = 3, p < 0.001$$

In other words, while boys and girls with age consistently increase the number of active male characters in their stories, the girls at each age level have significantly fewer active male characters. It is interesting to note that the boys of Class 4 (the oldest group) have fewer characters than the boys of Class 3 (second oldest group) overall; but they still have the largest score of all for the presence of active male characters. Though their characters are fewer, they tend to be male and active!

With regard to the number of active female characters portrayed in the stories, the analysis of variance indicated significant main effects of age ($F = 2.351$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.075$) and sex ($F = 107.592$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$); there was an interaction effect ($F = 2.834$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.041$)

(Table 21/22)

Table 21/22 ANOVA: active female characters portrayed in the stories

SOURCE OF VARIATION	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIGNIFICANCE OF F
MAIN EFFECTS	160.602	4	40.151	31.347	0.000
AGE	9.032	3	3.011	2.351	0.075
SEX	137.810	1	137.810	107.592	0.000
TWO-WAY INTERACTIONS AGE SEX	10.890	3	3.630	2.834	0.041
EXPLAINED	171.492	7	24.499	19.127	0.000
RESIDUAL	134.490	105	1.281		
TOTAL	305.982	112	2.732		

Table 21 Mean number of active female characters in each class

	Boys	Girls
Class 1	0.64	2.56
Class 2	0.28	1.78
Class 3	0.60	2.83
Class 4	0.33	3.53

$$F = 107.592, df = 1, p < 0.001$$

Table 22 Mean number of active female characters by age

Class 1	1.83
Class 2	0.78
Class 3	1.59
Class 4	1.93

$$F = 2.351, df = 3, p < 0.075$$

There is an interaction effect which may be due to the low means in Classes 2 to 4 among the boys.

The age effect was not so significant as the sex effect; however, the highly significant effect of sex revealed an interesting discrepancy between boys' and girls' perceptions of characters in the female role. The girls' capacity to present the feminine role as an active one should be reassuring to people investigating sexism in literature who are concerned about the apparent suppression of assertive, positive and energetic characteristics in girls and women in books. Further, the fact that girls can also portray males in an active role reveals a different perception of gender from that of boys. The boys do not show the same balance in their perceptions of males and females. In fact, the girls in the boys' world either do not exist or are acting out stereotypical roles.

This categorisation of themes, contexts and characters in the stories gave some insights into the perceptions of self and others by the young writers. I turn now to a more specific analysis of the development of social sensitivity as expressed in narrative writing.

CHAPTER 6

THE WRITTEN EXPRESSION OF SOCIAL SENSITIVITY.

Introduction

As the previous chapters have indicated, research into children's narratives has a varied history. Contributions to its study come from the disciplines of English, Linguistics, Psychoanalysis, Education and Psychology. The field is beset with difficulties, both when it comes to interpreting or evaluating the content of a piece of written work, and when the researcher is faced with the task of understanding the processes which underlie the written expression of thoughts and feelings.

Take eight-year-old Stephen's story as an example. It is called My Frightful Dream and it is about a car journey by the family on their way to Devon. They meet a 'mad driver' who plagues them unaccountably:

".... I went to sleep. Then in the morning we went on we were just going when the car in front of us reversed and hit our bonnet and my dad went and hit him back. Then we drove off fast and then we skidded off the road and we went through a fence and the other car followed us and he smashed our car and we turned over and we all closed our eyes and when we opened them we were all in hospital.."

The only expression of the horror which the characters must feel in this situation comes in an aside to the reader at the end, "Thank goodness it did not really happen!" Apart from this, the story is egocentric, few emotions are expressed and, most significantly, there is no insight at all into the motives which underlie the actions of the mad driver.

A traditional evaluation would focus on linguistic aspects of Steven's story. Pupils are still required to produce stories simply as a means of practising the skills of writing and the use of correct English. In recent years, however, there has been a greater

emphasis on narrative-writing as a way of helping children to express their own unique view of the world. The skills, it is claimed, can be learned in a context where the children feel that they need them for their own purposes as part of the ordering process which all authors use to make sense of experience. Graves (1984) makes this point when he stresses the need to leave control of writing with the child. Britton (1970,1977) and Hardy (1977) argue that through the creation of narratives children are enabled to build systematic representations of experiences which help them understand the past and anticipate the future. From this viewpoint, the writing of imaginative stories has the function of helping children deal more effectively with the people and events which they encounter in their everyday lives.

More specifically, Applebee (1978) has studied young children's story-telling skills and suggests that, through a process of 'distancing' themselves from their stories, children may explore and come to terms with happenings in their own and others' lives. However, young children's stories tend to be descriptive and lacking in the selectivity which is the mark of the skilled writer; they are also likely to be literal since the ability to use language metaphorically comes much later; statements are factual and feelings are seldom expressed in words. Young storytellers are often very egocentric with little interest in elaborating the characters of people other than themselves. The development of sensitivity to others and understanding of motives and feelings can be plotted over time. Applebee's research is concerned with the stories which children tell. As shown in Chapter 3, Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan (1980) present a model of children's writing which charts the development from simple to complex narrative, from literal to

metaphorical writing and from a preoccupation with self to an awareness of the psychological characteristics of others. The very young writer finds particular problems in conveying the richness of experience in the absence of gesture and facial expression and direct communication with the audience. This adds to the difficulty of a task in which the young writer tries to express feeling. For example, a seven-year-old, describing the saddest day of his life, writes:

"One day we were walking by the country side And i wanted
to look in a field and my dad walked on and chased him
and i fell over on my face"

(Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna and Swan, 1980, p.133)

Wilkinson and his colleagues comment on the absence of emotion about self and others and the lack of contextual information which is typical of the narratives of seven-year-olds. Like Applebee, they trace the growing awareness of self and others and deepening understanding of the effects which emotions, motives and intentions have on events and other people. By adolescence, they note, the writer is much more likely to show self-awareness and sensitivity to the feelings of others, and he may even go beyond the literal to the metaphorical use of language, as the following piece by a thirteen-year-old indicates:

"I hated school. I learned absolutely nothing. I was in
a backward class with an intelligence better than most
of the top class. Just because of my age. The 'super-
vision' was about as effective as a catapult used in a
war between Russia and America. Or worse"

(ibid, p.140)

In their analysis of narrative, Wilkinson and his colleagues distinguish between the dimensions of self (from unawareness to awareness), and others (the growth of awareness of other people and of the needs of the reader) and reality (the writer's concept of the environment). However, they do not quantify these categories in any way. In this part of the present study, I have used a method

very similar to that of Wilkinson and his colleagues. The 113 children were set the same two topics (as described in Appendix 3). These were two stories each chosen to elicit from the children themes which might give the opportunity to explore psychological reactions in both self and others, including the reader.

When I was very frightened, the first topic, gave the children a chance to describe a real experience in which intense emotions had been felt. Ample opportunity was given to the children to talk about the experience and 'relive' it in their minds before putting pen to paper.

Flight was chosen as the second title since it offered wide scope in interpretation by the children and could tap a range of real or imagined experiences whether of flying or running away.

Both writing tasks were administered by the class teachers to avoid any effects which the presence of a stranger might have on the writing.

Quantitative analysis

In order to make more precise comparisons among the age-groups, the two stories were scored for social sensitivity on four-point scales for:

- the psychological attributes of self or hero/heroine (A)
- the psychological attributes of other characters in the story (B)
- the extent to which details of the social and physical environment was given (C)

There was also a three-point scale for the sense of awareness of the reader's needs (D). Scoring criteria are shown in Table 23 with examples from each category, A, B, C and D.

Table 23 Categories for scoring the written expression of social sensitivity

A. Psychological attributes of self or hero/heroine

Score

1. The writer records his/her presence but no emotion is expressed, e.g. "I was flying my kite".
2. Some emotion is expressed but in a limited form, e.g. "I smiled".
3. The writer shows awareness of self-image, e.g. "I was going to have a few difficulties the next day" or "That made my heart flutter"; significant actions or dialogues indicate emotions, some elaboration of psychological attributes is given though the expression may be conventional.
4. The writer shows awareness of the complexities of emotion; aspects of character and behaviour are evaluated, e.g. "The reason why I was afraid was because I thought the monster was real and he would come out of the tele and kill me, but now I'm not afraid any more".

B. Psychological attributes of other characters

Score

1. Other characters are present but no emotion is expressed, e.g. "They jumped over the wall".
2. The writer begins to express emotion though in a limited form, e.g. "The witch laughed".
3. The thoughts and feelings of other characters are expressed in dialogue or by descriptions of significant actions; there is some elaboration of feeling although the language may be conventional, e.g. "My Mum told us off and told us to wait outside" or "Then my sister calmed him down and then we went to bed".
4. The writer gives analytical comments on aspects of character or behaviour; awareness of the complexity of emotion is expressed; personalities are differentiated, e.g. "Bob said, 'I don't know. I've always dreamed of escaping from this prison but I have never had the nerve to do it' ... or 'His gruff voice changed to a tone of amazement' or 'Although Mrs Squirrel disliked going underground she felt it only good manners to show the moles around'".

C. Details of social and physical environment

Score

1. The environment is mentioned but no details are given, e.g. "I banged my head against the cupboard".
2. The writer describes the environment giving just enough details to clarify the background, e.g. "I would get some hay and stiks and lay my eggs and sit on them".
3. The writer describes the environment in a way that shows it to be significant and stimulating, e.g. "I can see the world very small like a picture and I can see all the clouds around me and I can see the tops of the mountains and I can see a sparrow hawk flying overhead".

4. The writer chooses environmental items to achieve an effect, e.g. "Colditz a great dark castle with security as tight as a military plant stands out at night like a haunted castle ... knasty black wiring running round the castle with spikes as sharp as knives" or "The whole house rumbled. I was so lonely and scared, the rain poured down and lightning lit the room up with streaks of yellow rays. The thunder rolled through the skies making it as dark as a tunnel. Time went slowly and I could not get to sleep".

D. Awareness of the reader's needs

Score

1. The reader's needs are not catered for, the story is context-bound, information is incomplete and links are missing, e.g. "This man had his head chopped off and he eat it up and left the body behind".
2. The reader's needs are partially taken into account; the writer gives relevant information about time and context or introduces the topic, e.g. "All afternoon I had been trying to fly" or "One night I had a quick bath" or "I was playing darts and I was asked to do a wheeler on my bike".
3. The writer caters specifically for the reader through explanations which are often in parenthesis, e.g. "The cell he was in (cell 53) was dank and musty and the air was foul"; the reader is addressed directly, e.g. "I do not want to be angry, you see"; there is empathy with the reader, e.g. "It was one of those nights when you're awfully restless" or "What will happen to our heroes? Will they be splattered into nothing? It is too late to say"; the reader is given enough information to interpret the significance of the story for the writer, e.g. "That crash killed Joe but he was the first man to fly a motorised aeroplane and he got a medal for it".

By adding the points gained in each category a total score of social sensitivity was obtained from each child. The highest possible score was 15 (A4 + B4 + C4 + D3) for each story. Thus each child had a maximum score of 30. (This is similar to the method used by Chandler(1973) to obtain a measure of egocentricity in his study of the effect of role play on the egocentrism of delinquent boys). A total of 25% of the stories were scored independently by a clinical psychologist, Dr. Dilys Davies, experienced in this type of data analysis; inter-judge reliability was found to be 0.91. As the following extracts from the stories indicate, it was possible to categorise quite clearly the developing subtlety with which the children dealt with psychological attributes in their main characters (Category A). Eight-year-old Paula, for example, records her presence on an air-journey, but no emotion at all can be inferred;

"... When I went on an air-journey and my ear popped and I got some chewing gum and I look out of the window and I saw some clouds in grey and I went to see the captain and I went to help the lady's"

The heroine is present but no emotion is expressed; Paula's score would be A1. Ten-year-old Daniel, by contrast, shows distinct awareness of the self-image of his hero and gives some impressions of the fluctuations in emotion which an individual can experience:

".... I was thirty seven and deformed. I can't stand it any longer I said to myself one day and I decided to be a burglar. I was a burglar for three years and I became very wealthy but I still wasn't satisfied. I decided to get into the bigger business and became a train robber.."

The hero expresses his ambitions and intentions and there is some sense of self-awareness; the score here would be A3.

Eleven-year-old Mary-Anne gives a vivid description of loneliness and fear felt by her at her grandparent's home:

"....I was so lonely and scared, the rain poured down and lightning lit the room up with streaks of yellow rays. The thunder rolled through the skies making it as dark as a tunnel. The time went so slowly and I could not get to sleep. The wind howled and made the night colder than it already was ... I layed there frightened that nobody would wake me up in the morning and nobody would come into my room ..."

Mary-Anne analyses the feelings of fear which extend over a period of time, and she evaluates her behaviour; her score would be A4. In a similar way, the ability to indicate awareness of the feelings of others (Category B) both in relation to the hero or heroine of the story and in their own right as personalities, shows development over time. Claire, aged nine, mentions the panic experienced by passengers in an air-crash but does not elaborate on it:

"... We went straight to Luton airport. The plane was on fire so everyone was panicking we got out first because we were nearer the door. About 25 people were killed but none of our family were killed luckily..."

Her score is B2 since she expresses only limited emotion among the passengers; she shows no empathy for the victims nor does she give their separate identities. However, Joanna, aged eleven, creates quite distinct characters in a family of squirrels by using the device of dialogue; her score is B3:

".... 'Come along Papa' called Mama to her husband. 'Tea's on the table'. 'Okay dear' said Papa brushing his coat one more time and strolling into the kitchen of their underground home. He had a lovely dark brown coat and deep blue eyes. 'Bernard, Chocolate and Diane tea's on the table'
'Yes mamma. I'll be right down', called Diane.
'Us as well' called Chocolate and Bernard together.
'For what this family is about to receive may the lord make us truly appreciate' said Papa.
'Amen'
'Amen'
'amen'"

Mark, aged eleven, shows how emotions change over time and indicates a detached perspective on himself as a much younger

child who was afraid to watch Dr. Who; his score is B4:

"Sometimes people are afraid of something and one thing I used to be afraid of is Dr. Who. The reason why I was afraid was because I thought the monster was real and he would come out of the tele and kill me. But now I'm not afraid because the monsters aren't very frightening any more. It's what you feel when the monster kills a man which convinces you it could kill you too so that's what makes you afraid".

The extent of sensitivity to the psychological attributes of other characters is only one aspect of 'other-awareness'; the second (Category D) is concerned with the amount of empathy which the writer shows to the reader. Even quite young children are capable of relating to the reader by, for example, writing statements like 'This is made up' or 'Goodbye' at the end of their stories (D2) but over the years they seem to adopt a wider range of strategies. They will give appropriate information in parenthesis:

".... Mr Nosho (a posh man) was at the airport..."

"... The little bed was plonum(a metal) and betra(a type of cloth) ... "

Relevant occurrences may be summarised for the reader's benefit:

".... Jargon was serving a life-sentence for the murder of a Pan judge of the galactic court...."

"... Now if you look in space you might see bits of legs, arms, limbs, heads, feet and other bits..."

These examples would score D3.

When we look at the social and physical environment (Category C), we find that detailed descriptions are often missing in young children's stories. A typical description is this one by 7-year-old Calvin; it scores C1:

"One night I had a dream. It was about me taking off in a shuttle. I heard a man saying '10 9 8 7 6 5 3 2 1 We have take off. First I felt myself moving and then I felt sik 10 houres latter".

However, as they get older, young writers learn to use the context of the story both to give relevant information to the reader and as a means of heightening the atmosphere for effect. Thus, Danny, aged eleven, sets the scene for an escape from prison camp; his score is C4.

"... 7677203 that was our cell number, Philip Powell and I. We had been shot down from a night raid over Germany and were now in a castle atop a pinnacle of rock overlooking a valley. Our cell was one of the dungeons with rats scurrying over the floor. Every afternoon we were taken out for exercise in the woods... "

Another escape story by an 11-year-old uses the environment of Colditz Castle as an effective backdrop to the exciting events of the narrative through an ingenious literary device; he too scores C4.

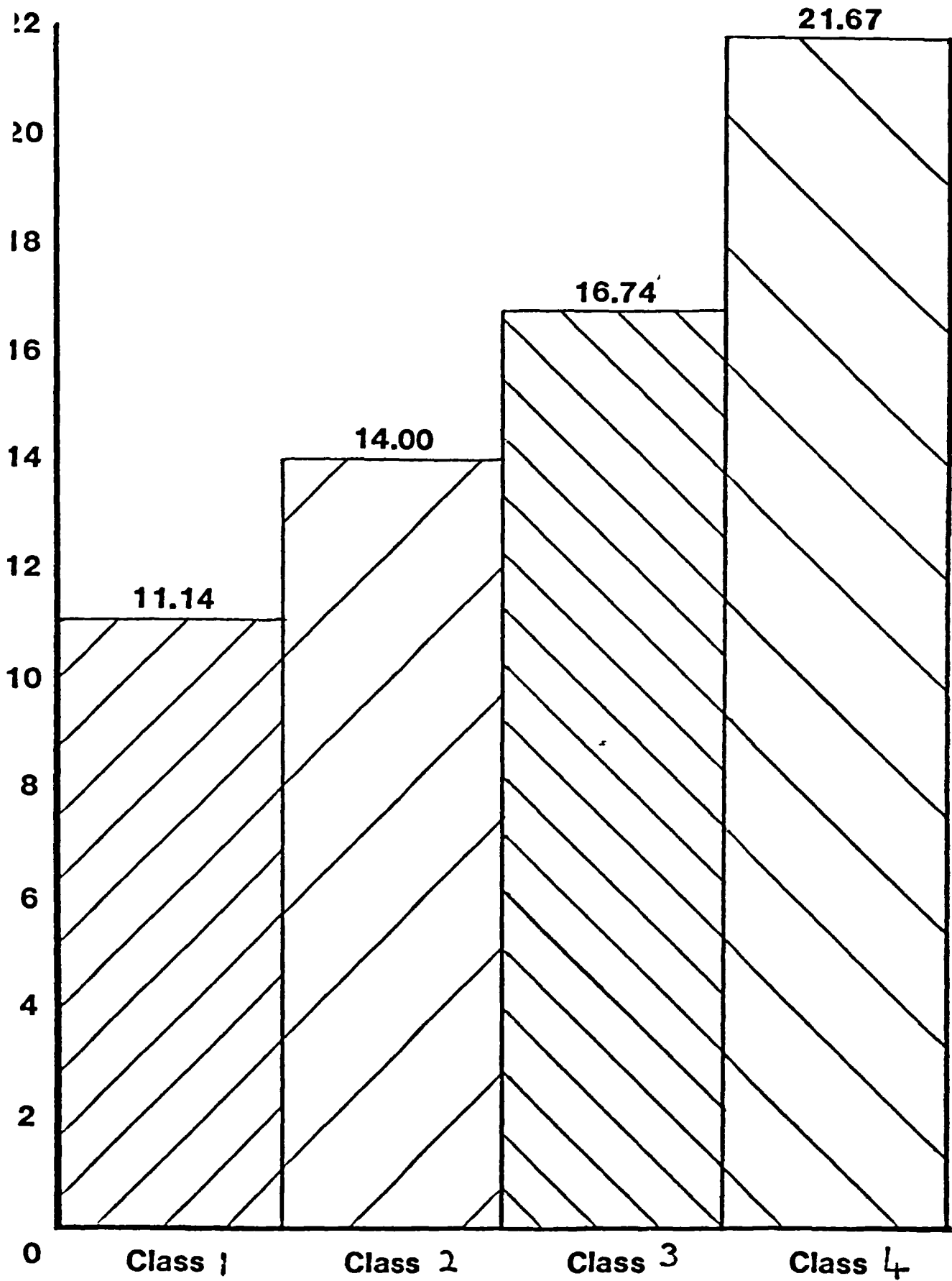
"... Colditz a great dark castle with security as tight as a Military plant stands out at night like a haunted castle. No-one ever dares to try to escape for they now too well if they were caught they would surely be shot. Knasty black wiring running round the castles with spikes as sharp as knives. "ahh that's my description of the castle. I think I'll start my diary tomorrow. Hi Bob, Fancy a game of cards?"..... "

As predicted from the literature review, the correlation between chronological age and social sensitivity score is high ($r = 0.6788$, $p < 0.001$). Table 24 and Figure 8 indicate that there are significant age changes in the written expression of social sensitivity, $F(3,105) = 30.81$, $p < 0.001$. However, differences between boys and girls are not significant $F(1,105) = 0.48$, NS, nor is there any interaction of age and sex, $F(3,105) = 1.74$, NS. (Figure 9).

Table 24 Mean social sensitivity scores in the stories

	Boys	Girls	Total
Class 1	12.09	10.56	11.14
Class 2	14.23	13.44	14.00
Class 3	16.60	16.92	16.74
Class 4	21.07	22.27	21.67

The findings confirm the suggestion by Applebee and by Wilkinson and his colleagues that children's writing develops in an age-related sequence from the literal and the factual to the affective



Figure

Age trends in the expression of social sensitivity.

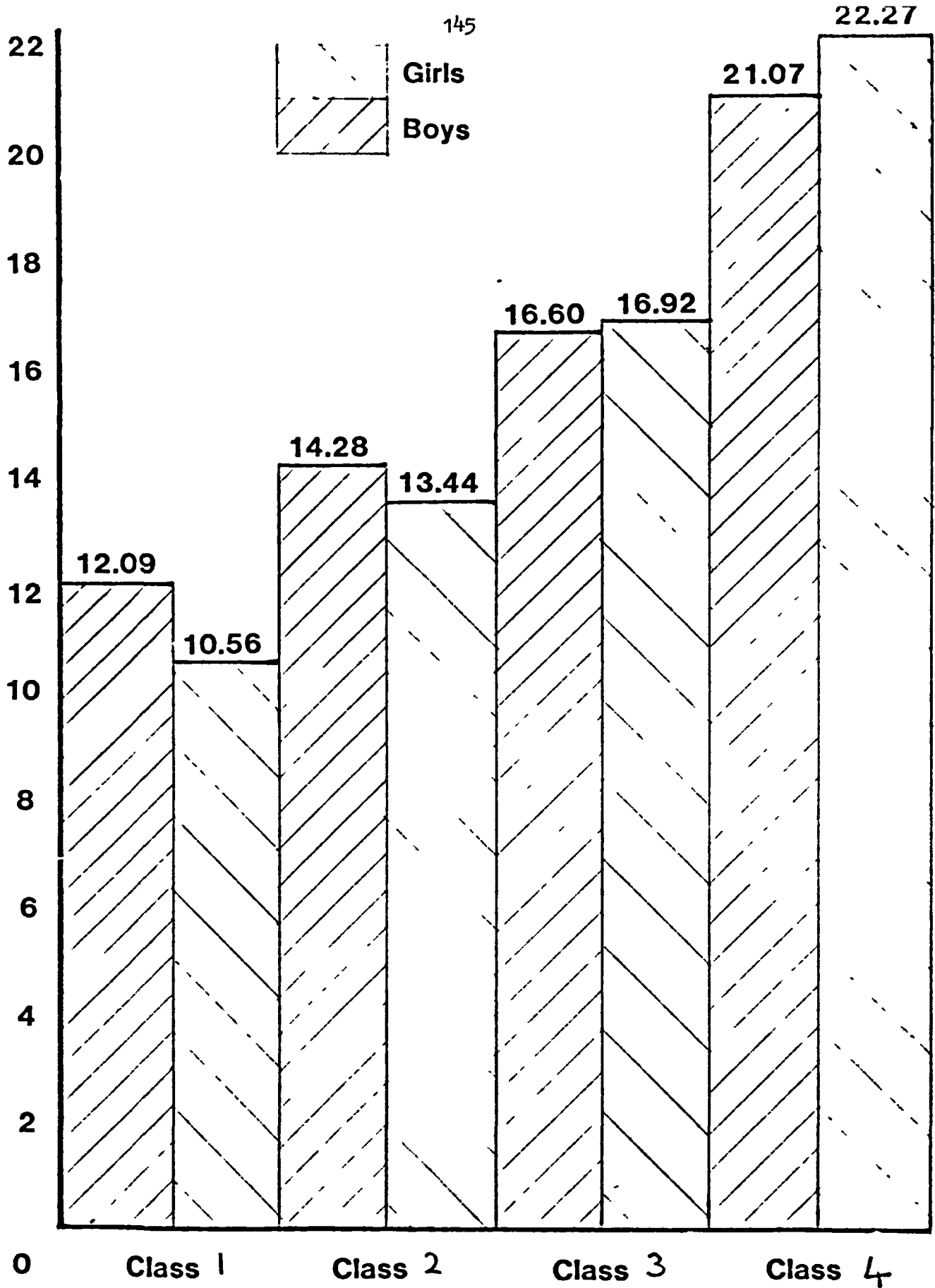


Figure 9
Age trends for boys and girls in the expression of social sensitivity.

and that it shows a growth in awareness of the psychological characteristics of the self and others.

Similarly, the results confirm the views stemming from research into social cognition that there are clear age differences in the concepts which children have of other people and that the increasing differentiation of children's perception of others is related to an increasingly structured cognitive system. The results indicate a growing ability during the junior school years to use a psychological vocabulary as a way of explaining behaviour and organising information to describe interpersonal interaction. What the children's stories seem to be reflecting is a growth of skills in empathy, social cognition, person perception and self awareness; it is suggested that this is in some part the result of the social changes in the social world of children as they move from home to school, acquire more varied and complex relationships with others, deal with conflicts and frustrations in friendships, cope with their own feelings about themselves and others, and attempt to adjust to new social situations. The people may be presented as robots or witches, princesses or aliens, the contexts as magic lands under the earth or castle dungeons, but the issues which are being explored are real.

It was also predicted that there would be a relationship between reading age and social sensitivity since it seemed likely that reading ^{offers} one valuable means for children to extend their horizons. [^] The positive correlation between reading age and social sensitivity score (Table 25) could be interpreted as indicating a two-way process. Children who read more acquire greater facility in the use of literary devices, vocabulary, style and narrative as a means of

achieving their aims; children who enjoy writing probably read with more perception. Perhaps at a deeper level children find reassurance in the discovery through their reading that the emotions which they experience are also expressed by characters in stories. The writing and reading of stories can, it is suggested, lead to heightened awareness of the feelings of self and others and it may facilitate a great deal of social learning in the process.

Table 25 Correlation coefficients between reading age and social sensitivity score.

Class 1	$r = 0.75$	$p < 0.001$
Class 2	$r = 0.59$	$p < 0.001$
Class 3	$r = 0.57$	$p < 0.001$
Class 4	$r = 0.65$	$p < 0.001$

Livesley and Bromley (1973, pp.118-119) found that intelligence was significantly related to the use which children make of 'central' statements or covert psychological state description. The high correlation in the present study between attainment and social sensitivity score (Table 26) may reflect the greater capacity of more able children to understand motives and personal characteristics and to form coherent impressions of people; it could also express their knowledge of the need to give appropriate information to the reader.

Table 26 Correlation coefficients between N.F.E.3. English Attainment Test and social sensitivity score.

Class 1	$r = 0.77$	$p < 0.001$
Class 2	$r = 0.60$	$p < 0.001$
Class 3	$r = 0.64$	$p < 0.001$
Class 4	$r = 0.76$	$p < 0.001$

Qualitative Analysis

The quantification of children's stories inevitably results in the loss of richness and imaginativeness. It seems appropriate, therefore, to include a qualitative analysis of the social sensitivity expressed by the children.

This section is concerned with the way in which children reveal their understanding of relationships among people through the handling of characters in their stories. It is suggested that with age children become more skilled at dealing with characters and the following extracts from Class 1 give some indication of the difficulties which young writers face. Younger children tend to have fewer characters in their stories, and very often these individuals are mentioned but scarcely elaborated. In fact, the seven/eight-year-olds in this sample are least successful in their attempts to describe interactions among a number of characters.

They seem to be best at dealing with self (a hero/heroine) alone or in relation to just one other person at a time. For example, Ruth, aged seven, has three characters who could interact (self, Adam, Mummy), but in fact she relates to either Adam or Mummy.

"I was in a shop when it happed. I was whith my brother and we were looking at some things and when we turned back Mummy was not there and looked for her but I could not see her so we looked outside the shop but Mummy was not there and then I went up and I went a round the corner and she was not there and I was crying and then I saw Mummy and I shoughtesed Adam".

By contrast, Judy's detailed story is more rounded since she is able to concentrate only on her main character:

"If I was a bird I wood fly high in the sky and I would make my nest in an oak tree and I would get very warm to make my nest I would get twigs and feathers and a lot of mud and a little bit of mud and some pese of grass and then I would go bak to my nest and go to slepe..."

It is interesting to see children at this age attempt to maintain action as well as dialogue between one character and another. The following story is about a girl who is kidnapped by a strange lady; no further information is given about this lady who simply disappears from the narrative. The girl finds 'a nice boy' in the house where she has been imprisoned and a conversation occurs:

"... I went up to him and said who are you I said I am Tom who are you he said I am Joanne the boy got up and said do you wot some bread yes pees so the boy went to the plas and got sum bread".

There the dialogue ends, however, as the boy goes to sleep in the bed and it is left to Joanne to escape by herself.

"... the boy went to the bed and went to sleep. Then I was (saw) a hole I tried to get throw...".

It is as if Joanne cannot simultaneously deal with happenings in the adventure and interactions between herself and the boy.

A very few children in Class 1 did succeed in keeping adventure and social interactions going at the same time. For example, Stephen S. describes how he meets Wonder Woman while flying in a magic toy plane. The dialogue shows that some children of this age are capable of taking the perspective of another person, in this case quite literally when Wonder Woman says "What a nice view!" He also captures his mother's sceptical reaction to the fantasy:

"... then wonder woman came up in her invisible jet she said what a nice vyew from up hire then John siad hallow you are sitting on the sky no Im not I am in my invisible jet said wonder woman and he went home he said mummy mummy I have seen wonder woman and I flew on my toy plane. She said you must of dreemd it".

When we look at extracts from the stories written by Class 2 where the children are aged between eight and nine, we find many bald statements like the beginning of Claire's story:

"\ baby sparrow, waiting for his lunch, finds his mother dead on the grass".

Claire does not expand the sentence or explore reactions to this event. Stephen P. shows the same inability as younger children to handle happenings and interactions between people when he describes a man being devoured by a monster:

"On Saturday night I watched Hammer House of Horror at 11. clock and this man had his head chopped off and he eat it up and left the body behind and in the morning a man went out and telephoned the police and in a second the police was there in a seck and he was dead"

There is virtually no interaction amongst victim, monster, bystander, police, despite the potential for it; the events take precedence over the emotional reactions of the characters and the resulting story is bare and rushed.

Another story typical of this age is Scott's. He writes:

"One day I was a police man and I was in a police car driving it round the street and I was fired. So I went to look for a job and I find a job on flying. I did not know if it would be a space pilot or a pilot on the Concord so I phoned the phone number it was 9775621 to see what it was. It was a space pilot on the 111tse space ship. I thort if I would be allowed so I phoned the space ship men who was in charge of space ship the phone number was 222.1111 it was a secret number and he said all right you can fly it and it just blew up and I could not do it I looked for another job. the end"

Scott seems to get so caught up in the adventure that he cannot deal with the social negotiations which take place between him and his first boss and, later, between him and his new employer, the 'spaceship man'. We don't hear anything about the reactions of the people in charge when the 111tse space ship is blown up. Yet there are exceptions to this trend. Here Elizabeth Freeborn, aged nine, describes in detail not only the feelings of terror which are associated with being followed by a strange man but she also gives insight into her relationship with her mother and the trust which she feels. She combines introspection with events and the two interrelate in a subtle way:

"You go round a corner and a car stop's and you walk faster and the car reverses and follows you and speaks to the next person in the car and you have to go, and run back to your house and tell your mum because you are frightened, and then you don't want to go out on your own again and you make your mum take you to where you want to go Frightened is being scared terrified"

Another exception to the rule is Tom (aged nine) who, in his description of an eaglet falling out of its nest, expresses the caring relationship between mother and child. Actions and feelings are closely inter-twined:

"...And then it happened! He fell out of the nest! For a few seconds he didn't know what was happening, but he soon knew! He felt the wind rushing by and at once wanted his mother. He was wailing with fright by the time he thought of trying his wings. So he did but if he opened them even an inch they hurt terribly. He could also see the sand coming closer and closer. He wished he was safe in the nest again. Then suddenly he saw his mother flying towards him. He wailed to her then tried to grab her and just caught her body. He was very relieved to be safe again.."

Tom's story shows unusual social sensitivity for a child of his age.

By the time they are in Class 3 (ages 9-10) however, there is much more awareness of the possibilities which the manipulation of a number of characters give to the writer.

For example, here is a description by Daniel of a quarrel over a snooker game. The interaction between the 3 characters - Daniel, his brother and his father - is much more accomplished and flows more naturally than the accounts by younger children:

"... Just because Mark lost his temper he through a que at my Dad. Dad ducked and the que hit the bunk bed at a speed and snapped in half. When I found out I when abbsouiliotly mad and fight in our house. when Dad came in our bedroom. He separated us and I still can't remember a time when I was so angry".

Even so, there are still gaps and omissions in stories written at this age. Darren describes an adventure where he tricks his friends into going to Disney Land (They think they are just going on a train journey:)

"... Their names were Robert, Daniel, James, Jonathan we planned to run away plane. Every one didn't agree to go on a plane because it might crash so they settled to go on a train but I had a trick up my sleeves. They did not know where the station was so they would think I'm taking them to the train station but I'm really taking them to the airport. Next morning we set off everyone had saved there money they had all saved twenty pound that made a hundred pound, including me. We had to get four busses they didn't know where I was taking them, finally we had got to the airport. they said 'Oy this isn't the train station. I said stop it would of been just a problem at the train station the train might tip up or we get blown off the platform and then everyone said I don't care that could happen. Darren said now lets go into the airport and get past the inspector...."

Darren expresses a whole range of interactions in this story - persuasion and trickery, acceptance, sharing of an adventure, camaraderie, humour, hostility of authority figures - and manages to integrate them into the story, but there are still abrupt switches reminiscent of earlier writing. For example, the actual journey takes up so much of the story that the holiday in Disneyland is covered in a few sentences. The only reaction by the boys' families is a row:

" The police came. They took us back to England where the police took us to there mums and me to my mum. I got told off and so did my friends"

But there is certainly more animation in stories like Darren's than in the relatively emotionless narratives of younger children.

In Class 4, where the age range is 10 to 11 years, there are still some stories where the interactions are abruptly or inadequately described, but they are the exceptions rather than the rule. Here, for example, Kim rather hurriedly resolves the difficulty of her heroine who has run away from her cruel foster-mother:

"I knocked on the door and a lady answered the door.
 She looked so nice. She said, "what do you want,
 little girl"
 "I have run away from a lady called Mrs.Sway. Please
 can I live with you. She's so wicked and she has
 green eyes too"
 "She must be a witch, girl"
 "I think that too, miss"
 "Yes you can live with me"
 "Thank you very much" ..."

Despite the breaks in the story, there is still an attempt at characterisation in the contrast between the 'nice lady' and the green-eyed witch. Kim herself was not happy with this story, indicating some awareness of the need for writers to delineate character appropriately if the story is to ring true. However, Daniel shows awareness of a range of feelings in his description of an early memory:

"One great memory I have is crying and weeping in the whitewashed seated place which was the deserted rabbit hutch and sulk, meanwhile my mother calling up to where she thought I was, in my room".

Again, (though less expertly) in Paul's story we see a scene from family life and a way of expressing love:

"... My dad was mending the hole in the roof when he got the ladder he put it against the wall and he went up the ladder and started to do it. Also when my mum went into the bathroom I went up the ladder and when my dad got on to the roof went up and tried to climb into the bathroom window but my mum saw me and said come on lovey get from there like a good boy so I got down and when I got down my mum told me off and called dad down..."

In this imaginative story, Joanne uses the environment to effect:

" It was a cold dark stormy night when Mr Blacken was sitting in his old wooden rocking chair. It creaked every time he rocked. Mr Blacken had a black cat. It had bright green eyes. In front of his chair was a rug and glowing in front of that was a big coal fire. Mr Blacken inherited his rocking chair from his aunt Blacken. It had been hers since her mother died. It had prople been parst down throw the family. People say that old Mrs Blacken's great,great,great,great, great,great granmother was a witch and she had lots of magic powers and it was her chair that she rocked in with her black cat with bright green eyes sleeping on her lap. All the Blacken family had black cats and so has Mr Blacken"

She creates a sense of interaction across generations and suggests the influence of the family on one individual.

Even the typical stories packed full of exciting adventures are enhanced by more skilful psychological observation. Michelle in her description of flight from a violent enemy draws a picture of co-operation and concern between a mother and daughter, despite their rising panic in the face of danger:

"... I quickly withdrew because an arrow hit the window frame missing me by inches. "Mother quickly come with me out of the back door. I know where we can hide!" i said remembering the old caves about quarter of a mile away. "We can use the horses if they are still alive!" my mother said. At that moment a axe sliced through the front door. "Quickly run out the back door. It's our only chance" We mounted the horses and made our way to the caves...."

With the same sort of skill Laura vividly portrays sibling rivalry in her account of a family meal:

"... Mum went out of the room and my sister started to flick peas at me. Splat right on my mum's ceiling it had squashed then she got her fork out like a catapult got her potatoe and flicked it at the cat. Just then Mum came in and wow was she angry She said 'Who made that mess?' and of all the cheek my sister said I'd did it. So I went over to my sister and hit her hard and I got all the blame."

In only a few words she captures the strong feelings of envy, spite and a sense of injustice.

The extracts give some impression of the ways in which children of different ages express in writing their own perceptions of people.

In conclusion, it is suggested that this type of analysis of children's stories gives fairly clear-cut guidelines for teachers and researchers to use in the evaluation of children's narrative writing. By retaining the quality of meaning in the stories, it focuses on children as communicating beings who are developing in their capacity to understand the social and psychological characteristics of themselves and others. It gives useful insights into

children's thinking processes and shows how young writers may use the world of imagination as a means of deepening understanding of their own lives.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to turn to a consideration of what the children themselves have to say about their stories and the functions which narrative writing might have for them.

CHAPTER 7RESPONSES TO THE INTERVIEWIntroduction

In the previous chapter I have examined how children's stories may reveal an age-related pattern of changes in the expression of social sensitivity. In this chapter I propose to describe the concepts of story which emerged from the children's responses to questions in the interview.

I interviewed each of the children in a quiet corner of the resource area, which served all four classes in the junior school. The questions (see Appendix 1) were deliberately open-ended in order to create a situation in which the children would feel free to express their own ideas. I was more interested in capturing each child's unique experience of writing than in collecting data which could be quantified or coded into categories although a content analysis of some of the responses was carried out. I was aware that often I was asking children about very personal areas of their experience and felt that a sensitive approach to each individual was most important. The nearest equivalent is the kind of approach which counsellors use when they first meet a client. No matter how apt the questions are, if the attitude of the counsellor is intrusive or abrupt, the client will close up.

As the children answered, I wrote down their responses. Initially I tried tape-recording responses but found that the children were made more self-conscious by the cassette recorder than by my writing. At the end of each interview, I checked the responses with the children to make sure that I had written down what they said. Confidentiality was assured and mostly the children seemed to talk in a free, uninhibited way. This was probably in large part due to the atmosphere of trust which existed in the

school since children were accustomed to talking about personal experiences with their teachers who were all receptive to what the children had to say and write.

Firstly, I was interested in any responses by the children which indicated that they used writing as a means of deepening their understanding of themselves and others. The development of social sensitivity in their narrative writing (Chapter 6) had suggested that this might be a function which writing served, although I did not know if children could articulate it.

Obviously the children who did not produce such a response might still find that story writing served that function for them. However, I gave the children every opportunity to express feelings about the writing process and with very few exceptions found that the children were willing, even eager, to discuss what writing meant to them.

Secondly, my aim was to discover children's own ideas on what made a good story and, conversely, what they meant by a bad or unsuccessful story. In the following sections, the children's responses are summarised and examples given to illustrate particular points.

Narrative writing as a means of understanding self and others

The following extracts from the interviews illustrate the extent to which children in this sample found story-writing helpful in making sense of social and emotional relationships. ,
Mostly these responses came in answer to the following questions:

Do you enjoy writing?

What do you need to write a good story?

Do you ever do any writing just for yourself that you don't show to anyone?

However, some of the responses appeared as the children were talking about reading or about the two stories of the present study, Flight

and When I was very frightened. In this section I report examples of responses by children of different ages.

In Class 1, where the children are aged 7 to 8, there were three children whose responses indicated that they were consciously using stories either to understand their own feelings or to enter the experience of another person.

Simon spoke of a piece he wrote about getting angry:

"One I'm very pleased with is the Angry one. It tells you a lot - how you get angry, why you get angry, what happens when you get angry and it tells you what to do - swear, punch, kick, stamp, be sent to bed."

I quote it here since it illustrates his own insight into strong emotions as he recalls an angry scene from a calmer perspective:

"When I was angry it was when my mummy said I could not go to the swings. It made me cross. I started to stamp my feet and I thump the wall and shouted. Then I threw the tisho boxes on to the floor. I wanted to swear at my mummy but I was not allowed to"

His spontaneous comment is that the writing of this account 'tells him a lot'. In fact, later in the interview he goes on to say:

"When I'm 18 I'll look back to when I was 8 and see what I wrote. I would think that I was doing interesting things - finding birds, watching kestrels and kites, finding acorns".

It would appear that Simon views writing as one way of making a record of his life so far.

Kirsty, in the same class, said of the chorus in her Flight piece which she made into a poem, Oh Bird So High:

"I thought it good. You can make a song out of it and I was thinking of the birds flying and I was thinking of the bird going to the tree, so I wrote that. I liked it because it was life-like - like birds".

Her poem begins:

"Bird so high
 As you fligh
 Tell me what it's like up there
 Tonight in my bed
 I shall dream in my head
 If I were up there.
 I would glide in the air
 I would flap my wings
 and sing a sweet song
 I would land in a tree
 and look and see
 if there were anyone else like me.

 Oh bird so high
 as you fligh
 tell me what it's lik up there ..."

Quite literally she seems to be trying to see the world through the bird's eyes and finds the poetic mode the right one for capturing her imaginative flight.

Using a more factual style, Claire also takes the perspective of another, this time of a hang-glider, in her story, but her comments reflect her feelings about the experience. The story is:

"If I were a hang glider I would just think of floating on a cloud high above everything. And I would see cotton wool floating about but still up above I can still see the blue sky. Then when I come below the cloud I might be looking down on the sea. But you know there might be danger. You must watch to see if any other kind of flying object is landing where you might what to land. Icarus must of felt like a hang glider."

She also shows the capacity to compare her hang-glider's descent with the fall of Icarus, a theme which the class had discussed in a previous lesson. She said of her story:

"I like Flight because I like thinking about the sky and the lovely sky and the colours of the sky, and it's a nice view from up where you are to where they are on the ground. I like thinking about the clouds and if I was floating in the air - quiet, lonely."

Like Kirsty, she has been flying through the air in her imagination and experiencing solitude and quietness.

These were the only children in their class who actually spoke in

this way about writing. It is probably no coincidence that they are all accomplished as writers of this age. Their average social sensitivity score of 15.3 is also higher than the average (11.04) for the rest of the class.

In Class 2, three children aged 8 to 9 indicated their use of story as a means of understanding self and others. In answer to the question:

'What do you need to write a good story?

Elizabeth says:

"I need something that's there and that's really happened. Then I can write more about it and describe it"

In her account of being frightened, she captures vividly the feelings of terror experienced by a little girl being followed by a stranger:

"You go round a corner and a car stops, and you walk faster and the car reverses and follows you and speaks to the next person in the car and you have to go, and run back to your house and tell your mum because you are frightened. And then you don't want to go out on your own again and you make your mum take you to where you want to go. Frightened is being scared, terrified."

She is also aware of how vulnerable you are when you expose your feelings in print. Of stories like these which she often writes at home she says:

"When people see them they're not that good. They might laugh at me inside. Sometimes they're just stories and I don't mind. When they're about me, people might laugh, They probably won't understand."

Yet she also understands that she can use stories as a means of understanding how other people view the world:

"Sometimes I like to write what's happened and put myself in the position of another person and see how they feel. I feel sorry for people who are blind. I feel sorry for them. I wish I could give them my own sight."

Despite the risks, she comes down in favour of feelings; at the end of the interview, she says:

"I like stories about feeling, I would put more feeling in if I could."

Owen, in the same class, liked his Flight story, The Escaped Balloon:

"Bye John hold on to your balloon it is quite windy out there don't worry I will. Wopesouch oh no the balloon is flying. Wopes ouch oh no the balloon is flying away. Come back to late. I shoulded of let go of it. Swishing, Swooshing what a lovely feeling I'm glad I am a balloon. Oh I hope the wind steers me clear of these. That was lucky Oh no. there's a bird, bird please don't burst me. no no no (BANG)"

He said of it:

"I got a lot of joy in writing it ... I think it's a lovely quiet thing and you can get your brain stuck into it. You can do exciting things, then it goes down to soft things like dragonflies and love affairs. My favourite is soft things."

He goes on:

"The way I appreciate stories - they give you good ideas. They're loving, slow-moving and quiet-moving - a good combination" and:

"It's lovely once you are given a subject. You write words down, find books to read I think of myself as an author. I take lots of imaginative words and jumble them up. I got an idea from The Trumpet of the Swan, The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and Danny; one's loving, one's dramatic and one has one side loving and one side wicked - that's a good combination A loving part, a wicked part and a nice part at the end makes a very good story."

Owen shows empathy for others and expresses a real sense of the pleasure which writing can give. From the story alone, the reader would not have a full sense of the feeling which has gone into it.

Although his story is a factual account of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, Adrian struggles to find words to express his feelings about the piece:

"I like the one about the caterpillar. It was..... (hesitates).. it had the smell of the spring air in summer. That's all."

Here is the story:

"There was a caterpillar was almost the right age it has shed its skin the right amount of times. One day the caterpillar crawled along a branch and rapped himself up in a case, and will chang from a caterpillar to a butterfly. It took about a month or two after that it will get out of the crislis and come out it dries itself out after a few hours it will try to fly. It will flap and flap until it can begin to lift off. It tries to fly up into the air. It was not very sexsefull the first time. It tries again. This time it can fly one foot off the branch then tries to take off this time two foot off. For the third time the butterfly find that this time it can fly up up into the sky it flies up up. It will grow up just as mother and father grew up. It will lay eggs like its mother and they to will do the same thing as the caterpillar in this story."

Without the interview, it would have been hard to detect the emotions behind it. These three children were also accomplished writers and had a mean social sensitivity score of 16'; the average for the rest of their class was 13.7.

The pattern of responses in Class 3, ages 9 to 10 was recorded in a similar way. However, in this class a number of children stated spontaneously that they definitely didn't like writing about themselves.

Ian, for example, said, "I don't write about my own life", and Nigel said, "I don't like writing about myself. I like writing things like Superman". Only one child spoke of writing as a way of coming to terms with an experience. Claire said of private writing done at home, "It's stories my mum says I shouldn't do because they're really sad - dogs and cats dying of a fever. I have some in my wardrobe. I won't read them because they're so sad, but I feel better when I've written them down". She reported that she got the same feeling of relief after writing about being very frightened when her parents were out for the evening; the climax of her story is that the creaking noises which so frightened her were made by her gerbils. Claire was the only child who articulated any conscious use of writing as a means of understanding self and others. Her

social sensitivity score is 19; the average for the rest of the class is 16.7.

The children of Class 4, aged 10 to 11, were most articulate about their own writing processes but even then, only seven children revealed an explicit description of what story writing meant to them. For example, of writing she does at home, Helen said,

"At home I describe things, have more passages. I describe people and things. I put them in a folder and read them when I'm bored; they help me remember what I've done or described. If someone comes to the house I write about them. I write about my thoughts"

Michelle, describing her frustration in not finding the right words, said:

"It was about my own feelings about my cat when he was ill and about finding a stray".

The theme was so painful that her story did not work out, yet she was trying, through a story, to come to terms with the fact that her cat was dying. Later she said:

"I have an idea and I like other people to imagine what I'm trying to make them imagine, so they can see and feel in their mind what I've seen .. When a character starts talking I like to feel that I'm that character and that the others are talking to me... I try to get morals into my stories. It helps people see what might happen".

Michelle sees her writing as serving a number of functions. She uses the writing as a way of gaining perspective on her own emotions, especially painful or disturbing ones; she also has a sense of what her writing may do to other people's view of her and of themselves. For example, her extract in Chapter 1 of this thesis shows her concern to get other people to understand what it is like to be small. She also states that she 'takes part' in the events which she creates and interacts with the characters of her stories. In this sense, her writing may well be a sort of rehearsal for her own interactions in real life. In fact, when

I asked her directly, "What do you need to write a good story?", she replied,

"I've got to sit down and think; for example, a storm, think how many people, their names, have interesting people. Are they from a rich family and are spoilt or are they poor people? Put information about the background in. Write down what they are, not just their names. Then you have a picture of that person, then carry on with what they're going to do".

Michelle is very articulate in expressing what her intentions are in writing and in evaluating why stories are successful or unsuccessful. She is also accomplished as a writer. It is interesting, therefore, to contrast her thoughts with those of Mark who also writes well. He said of writing he does at home:

"Sometimes I doodle away on a piece of paper for my own enjoyment, for example, about trains, I think that I'm Stephenson and going down the Liverpool-Manchester Railway. I may not write it on paper. I may write it in my mind. It's like taking lots and lots of photographs and then they come out of your mouth. It's like that. As soon as ideas come out you write them on the paper. At school I just get the first idea - horror or Dracula - and then they stick in my mind and I use them in my story. I often think these ideas in bed". He goes on: "You can learn things from stories you write. You can think up words for space ships and they stick in your mind for a long time".

Mark seems to be using his reading and writing of stories as a means of finding out about events as well as people and building up a store of information for future use. For example, in quoting his favourite author, Willard Price, he says,

"You use the ideas, have excitement and learn a lot about them. In Clear Ahead you learn about the railway officer - small room, hardly any dust in it, the boy felt he had to take off his shoes and socks and hat. You feel you have experienced it. I try to write like that. I don't always succeed".

In fact, at the end Mark asked me, "What are stories for?" I replied, "I find they take me into another world. They help me understand other people's points of view and also my own life. It is interesting through story to go into another country or go back in time". Mark responded at once. "I do that! I read about the Rocket

and the man who was killed on the first Liverpool-Manchester train journey. I imagined myself there".

Mark's comments suggest that he is using narrative to widen his experience and increase his perspective-taking skills. His story about Jo the doomed pilot on his first test-flight, illustrates how Mark uses factual information to build up an imaginative story:

"My name is Joe Smith and I'm going to make a device called an aeroplane which has one engine, and my engine is a 100 c.c. bus engine. The wings are made of spruce and covered with a type of tissue. All I've got to do now is make the aeroplane because I have drawn the plans already... The story ends: ...

"Contact wow she runs like a dream I'm flying yippee o god the steering column's broken I'm going to crash..argh! That crash killed Joe but he was the first man to fly a motorised aeroplane and he got a medal for it. The aeroplane was copied again and used in the first world war".

Duncan is less articulate about why he writes stories but some of his comments suggest that he too is exploring his own and others' feelings in his writing:

"I did a story about smuggling 10 pages long You can say what they felt like when they're caught".

Again, as he describes a romantic poem about a ghost who falls in love he describes :

" a feeling of her running in the trees - you feel like you're the person running through the trees and falling in the mud. My leg goes funny just thinking about things I've been reading".

David J. describes where he gets ideas from for his writing and although he rejects feelings and prefers action is in fact exploring motives and personality in his use of characters. It's interesting to see his concern for the authentic detail which he gets from his grandfather. He says of one of his own stories:

"I like Colditz. I got more thoughts about that one. I've seen loads of films and I have books on escape. My grandpa was in the war and I ask him what he did- he worked on the planes- and ask what planes he used to work on. He mended radios and transmitters. One day I asked him about D-day and when he moved in. He said three weeks afterwards he was transported on to the airfield. He knew most of what was going on. I prefer writing about the war. I like it more

then feeling. I don't like writing about feeling much. I prefer escape ... parts where your heart stops and the hero is just about to be shot".

Like Mark, he finds it helpful for his story-writing to do research into the topic first. This contrasts with Michelle who tends more to explore her own inner world of feeling.

Jon, a prolific writer whose brain teems with ideas, considers it necessary to have 'imagination' as well as 'good knowledge of the age' in order to write a good story. He specifically says that "I don't like social life; it's not necessarily adventurous.... You don't want to be limited by human life". But he does add, "I may be able to incorporate social life into space stories".

Samantha, another fluent writer, describes one of her own successful stories about ghosts:

"I believe in ghosts. Jane says she has seen a ghost. She was sitting on the toilet and saw a white figure sitting at the bottom of the stairs. It could have been her grandad come to wish her a happy birthday. I also like history a lot and can imagine myself back in time. I close my eyes and see myself there. I don't like writing about magic lands as younger children do, but more sensible things. My sister likes hearing about magic carpets and pixies and elves. I don't like that. I prefer when I can imagine myself there. I'm in a world of my own when I write".

She shows awareness of her use of stories to transport herself into another world and acquire experiences which are not available in her everyday life.

So, in Class 4 there were 3 boys and 4 girls who indicated in some way that they found in writing a way of widening their understanding of themselves and others. Their mean social sensitivity score is 23.3; the mean for the rest of the class is 20.3.

The results of this particular interview suggest that it is only a minority of children who openly express the use of story-writing as a means of exploring personal and social feelings in self and others.

With age this capacity to reflect on the function of

writing for personal development seems to increase but such reflective introspections do not seem to come easily to junior school children. By contrast, the children found it much easier to answer questions about why a particular story was good or bad. Their responses are discussed in the next two sections.

The children's concepts of a good story

The children's responses to the questionnaire revealed two broad concepts:

- 1) The children's concept of what makes a good story
- 2) The children's concept of how to improve an unsatisfactory story.

These came mainly from answers to the questions 4a and 4b (Appendix 1):

4a) Tell me about one of your stories which you thought was very good. Why did you like it?

4b) Tell me about a story which you did not like so much. Why were you not pleased with it? How could you have improved it?

The following categories emerged from the content analysis of the children's concepts of what makes a good story: (Table 27)

Table 27 The definition of each of the categories in children's concepts of what makes a good story.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Types of response</u>
1) No reason/don't know	where the child either did not know what he/she thought made a good story or simply said 'I like it' with no elaboration.
2) Adventures/excitement	'adventures', excitement' 'action', adventures like 'the magic lake'
3) Description	where the child mentioned 'good words', 'describing words', 'words that tell you about somebody', 'interesting words like <u>galactic</u> '

- 4) Structure of story

mention of any part of the story was included in this category: 'a good ending'; 'where all the parts of the story fit together'; 'a good beginning, middle and end'; 'it had a moral'; 'not rushed at the start or middle'; Any mention of a plan: 'I sit down and plan out what I'm going to do'; 'I work out how to miss out all the boring parts'; 'It was good because it had a happy ending'.
- 5) Involvement of feeling

any comment in which the child explicitly stated that his/her involvement in the story made it good, e.g., 'It's good because I can be there in imagination'; 'I think up things which might happen to me'; 'It helps you see the other person's point of view'
- 6) Good characters

the presence of well-developed characters: 'I find people I'd like to put in my stories'; 'the people in my stories make me happy'; 'good characters'
- 7) Length of story

any mention of length of number of pages: 'I like it because it's long'; 'It was good because I did three pages'
- 8) Reality of story

where children stressed importance of truth or reality of story; 'It was good because it really happened to me'; 'It was true'; 'if you didn't know about kites, it wouldn't be a good story.

- 9) Humour 'It was good because it was funny.'
- 10) Technical aspects any mention of hand-writing, spelling, neatness: 'It had good writing'.

Table 28 The children's concepts of what makes a good story

	Class 1 N = 29	Class 2 N = 27	Class 3 N = 27	Class 4 N = 30
1) No reason/don't know	6	2	-	-
2) Adventures/excitement	13	20	23	25
3) Description	3	7	2	21
4) Structure of story/ beginning,middle,end	3	2	7	14
5) Involvement of feeling	-	1	1	5
6) Good characters	-	2	-	7
7) Length of story	4	1	1	-
8) Reality of story	1	4	4	4
9) Humour	1	-	-	2
10) Technical aspects	-	-	1	1
Total number of categories	31	39	39	79
Mean number of categories per child	1.07	1.44	1.44	2. 63

Table 8 summarises these responses.

Five of the categories are relatively infrequently selected by the children. However, the trends which are revealed by them are still worth mentioning.

Category 1 (Don't know) is expressed by six children in Class 1. In other words, these children cannot say why they like a story; only two children came into this category in Class 2 and there was no response of this type among the older children.

Category 7 (Length of story) is chosen by four children in Class 1 but only by one in each of Classes 2 and 3. This category is not mentioned at all by Class 4.

Category 8 (Reality of story) indicates a trend which goes in the opposite direction. Only one child in Class 1 mentions it but four in each of the other Classes do. This refers either to the children's liking of stories which are factually true or to stories which, in the child's view reflect truth about his/her inner state of mind.

Category 6 (Good characters) appears infrequently among the younger children (only two children mention it in Class 2) but it is considered by seven children in Class 4.

Category 5 (involvement of feeling) also appears infrequently among the children of Classes 1, 2 and 3 but is mentioned by five children in Class 4.

The responses in Categories 9 and 10 are so infrequent that they are not considered useful to the present discussion, however important they may be to the individual children who mentioned them.

Categories 2, 3 and 4 are the ones which feature most prominently in the children's answers. In each case there is a developmental trend with the concept tending to be mentioned more frequently as the children get older. The table indicates how important for many children at all ages is the presence of adventure and excitement (Category 2) in a story. The number of responses in this category increases from 13 in Class 1 to 25 in Class 4.

The use of description (Category 3) is not considered except by a minority of children until Class 4 when 21 mention it as a factor in writing a good story. Even more striking is the change in concern for structure. The younger children scarcely mention it, and when they do, the focus is only on endings. In Class 3 only five children mention it. In Class 4, fourteen children mention it and, as the extracts from their comments show, the concern is not only for endings but also for overall structure.

It is interesting to note the large increase in responses which occurs in Class 4. The children produce on average more than twice as many responses (2.63) indicating that quantitatively they

have more to say than younger children about what makes a good story.

The following extracts from the interviews, described class by class, reveal some of what lies behind the categories. In the youngest age-group, six of the children recount a story written by them but cannot make any sort of judgement about it beyond 'I liked it' or 'I didn't like it'. The most common response, however, is that a good story is made up of 'lots and lots of adventures' or is 'exciting'; thirteen of the children made that kind of evaluation. Nigel, for example, says:

"When I've made up a story, I keep on going and just try and end it by putting 'They lived happily ever after'. One I did eight pages and I couldn't stop".

Matthew is making the same point when he says:

"Space would be a good story for me because you can make it long. A planet is one universe and then there are more planets and you can have different planets and make it good".

For Simon, the problem is simply to find time to write down all the exciting things with which his mind teems:

"I like writing about ghosts, adventures, animals and birds, and pirates. Ghosts are the best. I'm writing one now about The House of the Nightmare in class. There's an alligator with a dripping mouth. It's a made-up story. I like writing about the army, space, underground in the mine, dinosaurs, earthquakes and volcanoes - hot slurping mud. I like reading books. They give me ideas. Hard books like the Bible - to learn about Jesus and the Israelis. My sister goes to college and she learns about work. I like to make clay models and I write about them - paper maché models - what I did, the paper I used. Best of all is studying gardening - flowers, planting seeds and bushes. I write about many things, when I was born, when I came to this school, I like digging up things and writing about them. I wrote about a kestrel's nest I found in Hampton Park. I know they've got sharp beaks and evil eyes, and there were chicks in it, eggs and chicks just hatching. My favourite is writing about how volcanoes work and how hot the streams are. If it gets hot, the stream might explode and spurt up like water out of a water valve. If there's an earthquake, it's like overlapping plates - if that moved (demonstrates) the gas would escape. I like planting and find stories to tell".

For children of this age, the predominant objective seems to be to get the adventure down on paper without worrying too much about how effectively the events are recounted. However, a small minority (three) report a concern for the quality of the words which they use. Sharon, for example, thinks it good to choose 'difficult and nice' words while Andrew expresses great pleasure in finding 'giant long words like girnormous'.

Only one child mentions structure and here he is simply commenting on his difficulty in finding a good ending for his stories. No children mention characterisation and none considers feelings. One mentions that she likes true stories because they have really happened to her.

In Class 2, twenty of the children say that what makes a story good is excitement and adventures. Lynne gives a typical response:

"At home I wrote a story Me and My Friend's Adventures. We have adventures everywhere - adventures that haven't happened in enchanted lands up enchanted trees. I like all adventure stories".

Joanna likes adventures and magic because 'it makes me shiver inside'. Some of the stories seem to grow naturally out of games played outside or acted out in fantasy at home. Mark, for example, describes how he incorporates his friends into his story which began as a game about World War Two:

"It was me and Owen and Adam. I was thinking of the Stukas' invasion at the Battle of Britain. We thought of Stukas coming in and we ran to the guns to get the Stukas away. There were two hundred and fifty six planes and we were trying to shoot them down with four guns per plane. We destroyed one hundred and fifty of them and then some other people helped us shoot them. In the end we put an atomic bomb on the ground. When the planes were coming in to land they would land on it and it would go off!"

What started as a game becomes a long episodic story as the following extract from his account of it indicates:

"The Stukas had taken off from bases and were coming over the ocean to attack Great Britain. Everyone got into shelters. Adam took a shot but missed the Stuka. The Stuka crashed and blew up in a cornfield. Then a big fleet of Stukas came directly aiming at our base. They blew up one of our huts and most of the places. 2 Hurricanes went off trying to get them. I contacted my friend and told him a Spitfire hadn't been allowed to take off. Then we went over to Owen and told him, "The Germans are coming even closer in their Stukas" and all of them let go and wiped out our base. We got out. We landed and saw some British who had crashed. We helped them and took off. Adam shot one down - the leader - then I shot down a leader and Owen shot down a leader. Then we went back to base and went to London to the Tower and I got an Airforce Cross and a VC and so did the others. Then the alert went and more Stukas came over. There was a hideout and a jeep leading to a base, so we took off again and went out again and attacked them. We shot down a lot of them but they destroyed Big Ben, they attacked Parliament, they went to Trafalgar Square, landed and shot all the men, and ran down, got into jeeps and tanks and headed for London. The people were under the sewers. There was no sewage, just water. The aircraft were covering them. They shot down London and took hostages and put the prisoners into a troop carrier. The British made the signal for the All Clear and came out and looked around the rubble for people; they built houses again and built London up again, and we got more medals. We went to the Navy. Near Pearl Harbour we were attacked by Japs - the back part was destroyed but not sunk..."

At this stage it is clear that most children seem to perceive a story as actions and characters loosely linked together. Here Jason shows how he does it:

"I get my ideas from cartoons - strength and running and speed. We change the names or the speed and strength. Some characters I find in books. I get the names, read about them and whether they have strength. I don't use a normal boy or a mouse. Sometimes I get two characters at a time and use one, write it down, take another character and use him and write it down, and then I look and see which is the best. I may just use the name and then use another which has good strength, and then get another who can run. Sometimes I put them all in one story - a gang of Road Runners and a gang of Superstrongmen - then they fight one very strong person, someone who isn't a character, like someone who has really killed on the street. I look in the newspapers or listen to the news. Sometimes I get the name of one person in the news like the Yorkshire Ripper against someone else and combine him with cartoon characters and then take the face off Superstrongman and get another, like the legs of Superstrongman and the arms of Road Runners and use the body of an ordinary man".

Four of the children in this group prefer true stories. Three, all boys, simply prefer factual things to fantasy. As James says:

"I don't like writing about something if I have no experience".

The fourth, Elizabeth, writes about imaginary situations but is aware of their underlying truth for her in the sense that they are about personal issues of concern to her. She is unusual too in that she mentions the importance of stories for her in the expression of feelings. She describes how she integrates her own self-consciousness about being small with the feelings of her character, a girl who has shrunk, and a little beetle. She says:

"I put what the girl and the beetle must be feeling. He seems big. It must be nice for him to feel he's not the smallest thing. I like the characters and I get a feeling there's a meaning to that story ... I'm the smallest in my class and I have to look up at the others. I'd like to be taller. It feels that you're left out".

Elizabeth is also the only child in this class who mentions structure in stories. In her words she describes one problem of writing a story as: "Sometimes the beginning's good, the end's good but there's not a good middle".

In Class 3, twenty three children mention that exciting adventures make a good story. As before, the majority view this factor as the main one in the creation of a good narrative. Only two mention description but there is a slightly larger number of children (five) who consider structure. Jon's answer is typical of these five:

"I like writing adventure stories - scary things at night and going on journeys. I write about whatever comes into my head and then re-arrange it into whatever we're supposed to be doing. While Mr. Lowson's talking about it, I'm planning it out in my mind".

Like younger children, he is still coping with the problem of getting all his ideas down but he is also concerned with structuring his stories for best effect. He goes on:

"I don't like ending my stories. They always seem to end so quickly; otherwise I go on for ages. I end it in a good way if it's exciting. Otherwise I end it in a boring way, like someone dies or something like that".

The majority continue to enjoy writing stories which are action-packed. Four, however, are concerned about creating stories which are true or have a basis in reality. Claire, for example, wrote about an imaginary plane crash but liked it because it helped her with the sad feelings she had about her friend who had really been killed in this way; she made a happy ending in which she and her family escaped. Sharon likes to recapture experiences which have really happened to her. She says:

"I felt dizzy as I wrote about going on the big wheel at the fair".

Toby and Kelly simply prefer fact to fiction and like to write about things which are 'true and exciting'.

In Class 4, 25 children mention adventures as being essential for a good story; however, other elements are entering into the concept of story reported by children in this age-group. Descriptive words are seen as being very important for creating an effect or setting the scene. 21 children mention description in answer to what makes a good story. Where the description is inadequate, the writer considers the story to be a failure. As Helen points out:

"One a few weeks ago. It sounded good as I wrote it. When I read it through it was a disaster. It didn't work out. It was about someone losing a coat and they had to go through different things to find their coat. It could have been exciting but the way I wrote it, it didn't sound right. I should have put in descriptive words and read it through as I went along. By the end it was too boring. It was too late to change it. Mr Keeble thought it good but I didn't".

Elizabeth shows how her words created a mysterious ghostly atmosphere:

"Some people are going to move and they are spending their last night in the house. The clock struck midnight and they woke up to hear it strike. It was exciting. You felt you knew what was going to happen. They woke up, went into the hall, heard strange music. Everything went misty. They went to the spare room and peeped through and saw misty figures dancing. They were old-fashioned. They kept looking, heard laughing; the sounds came clear, the pictures faded and the clock strikes one. It fades out. The children stay. Everything's blank again. They go back to the bedroom. In the morning they go back to the spare room and there is nothing there. 'To this day it remains a mystery' The end'
It was good because it was so mysterious. They didn't quite know what it was. I wouldn't change it. It was right the way it was".

Joanne H. has pleasure in finding the right words to create a character in her story:

"I like describing people. In adventures I can't describe them and I find if I want to describe I don't now how to. If it's about people you have something to describe and if they talk you can say how they said it. That adds excitement to the story".

Jon finds delight in using unusual words like 'tetrapod' and 'Galactic'.

This concern for effective description is reflected in the stories which children of this age write, with their greater capacity to create convincing characters, set a scene and use the environment as an effective aspect of the events of their narrative.

Fourteen children in this class mention structural aspects of a story.

David, whose Colditz story has such an effective beginning, has his own ideas on how to plan a story:

"I try to think of a beginning- a cold night, big shadows loomed down on me, I looked up, there were lights flashing, I ran as fast as my legs would carry me. They were invaders from Mars. I let it flow, stop and think, think of other ideas, like a beginning, a middle and an end. I stop and think".

Mark compares the process to the workings of a computer:

"It's like scanners in my head, a memory bank. I sort out the photographs in my head, take out the right one and take negatives off it of ideas. You select the right thing you want and feed it through the computer".

Unlike the younger children, these writers in Class 4 are interested in the overall structure of their story and go to some trouble to plan in advance. They are aware of the need to set the scene, to introduce characters to the reader and to bring the story to an appropriate climax. In fact, some of the children comment specifically on the impact which an ending can have, either for making a moral point or for humorous effect. As Michelle says:

"The ending can help people see things that might happen to them".

Furthermore, at this stage, some of the children seem more aware of the omissions, such as inadequate descriptions, hurried development of ideas or ineffective endings, and how they can spoil a story.

The children's concepts of a bad story

The children's concepts of what makes a story bad or unsuccessful and how it could be improved are reported in this section. Table 29 describes the categories which emerged in responses to question 4b.

Table 29The Definition of each of the Categories in Children's Concepts of how to improve an Unsatisfactory Story.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Types of Response</u>
1. Write the story again	Any comment which stated that the story should be written again from the beginning.
2. Don't know	The children had no idea about how to improve a story.
3. Ask an adult for help	The children had responses like 'I'd ask my mum'; 'I'd get my granny to help'; 'Ask my teacher'.
4. Make it longer	Where the child simply said that he/she would 'write more'; 'make it longer'.
5. Make it more exciting	The children said 'I'd make it more exciting'; 'I'd put in more adventures'.
6. Use more describing words	The children mentioned 'description'; 'more details'; 'more interesting words'.
7. Alter the structure of the story	The children would change the beginning, middle or end; 'alter certain parts'; 'make a better ending'; 'fit the parts together'.
8. Make it more credible	Make the story more convincing. 'Don't have toys talk'; 'The ship wouldn't sink like that'; 'I should have made it real': a snowman wouldn't have come alive'.
9. Change a character	Alter the personality or occupation of a character in the story; 'I'd have made him famous and a funny clown!'

Table 30How to Improve an Unsatisfactory Story.

	<u>Class 1</u>	<u>Class 2</u>	<u>Class 3</u>	<u>Class 4</u>
	N = 29	N = 27	N = 27	N = 30
1. Write the story again	13	6	6	6
2. Don't know	7	6	5	3
3. Ask an adult for help	5	-	-	-
4. Make it longer	6	3	2	1
5. Make it more exciting	2	5	5	7
6. Use more describing words	-	6	2	13
7. Alter the structure of the story	4	4	12	18
8. Make it more credible	1	4	3	5
9. Change a character	-	2	-	3
Total number of categories	38	36	35	56
Mean number of categories per child	1.31	1.33	1.30	1.87

Table 30 summarises these responses.

Four of the categories are more frequently mentioned by younger children than by older ones.

Category 1 (Write the story again) is chosen by thirteen children in Class 1 but only by six in each of Classes 2, 3 and 4. This category was mostly about technical difficulties such as hand-writing, spelling and punctuation.

Category 2 (Don't know) was slightly more likely to be expressed by children in the two youngest groups.

Category 3 (Ask an adult) only appeared in Class 1 where five children mention it as one way of improving a story.

Category 4 (Make it longer) shows a slight decrease with age from six in Class 1 to one in Class 4.

Three categories show an increase in incidence with the age of the child.

Category 5 (Make the story more exciting) shows a slight increase with age although it could simply be another way of stating Category 4 (make it longer); if this were the case, there would be no difference among the age groups.

Category 6 (Use more describing words) is one which shows a clear increase from none in Class 1 to thirteen in Class 4.

Category 7 (Alter the structure of a story) shows a clear increase from four in Class 1 to eighteen in Class 4.

Two categories show no strong trend by age.

Category 8 (Make it more credible) though the highest number still come in Class 4.

Category 9 (Change a character) appears only in Classes 2 and 4.

As before, overall, there is a big increase in sheer number of responses between Classes 1, 2 and 3 on the one hand (38, 36 and 35 respectively) and Class 4 (56).

The following extracts reveal some of what the children consider useful in improving a story.

As far as description goes, the youngest children scarcely mention this as a means of improving a story at all. Tom, aged nine, is one of the few who shows concern for the quality of his writing. He is critical of his story, The Wooden Horse because it does not convey the suspense of events and says:

"I don't like "then we opened the city gates and we all went in and we all attacked". I could have put more exciting bits in like "the creaking door" or "we went into the enormous city gates" or something like that. For "there was music and celebrating" I should have put "they were doing a war dance" with more expression, more information about the kind of music, the instruments like drums and all the other stuff".

He indicates some sense of the power of descriptive words to convey actions and feelings in an effective way. Gideon, also nine, puts it in a different way. He says:

"I like to describe things and what I feel while I'm doing them. While I'm writing I get scared if I'm right into the story".

However, the children in Class 4 show more understanding of the use which they can make of descriptive words to enhance their narratives. Just how difficult it is to capture an atmosphere is described by Sharon, who like several other children, has found ^{that} the wrong choice of words can make people laugh inappropriately:

"... there was not enough about the haunted house. I didn't explain how it looked, there weren't enough descriptive words. I should have explained that the ceiling fell down or the stairs had cobwebs and things like that, the grandfather clock had glass over that thing that ticks which was broken, and that sort of thing. I would have explained how it felt and then seen the ghosts; I should have done something with the ghosts, I just met them. I would do something with them".

Stephen, too, shares this problem, especially when he is trying to describe a person:

"The problem is you get muddled up with words, like a person what he's like and what he does. When you've wrote about him you get muddled up".

Structure is the other main aspect which changes with age. The children in the three youngest classes are concerned mainly with endings when they do mention this as a means of improving a story. It is not until Class 4 that the children really discuss in any detail the problems which they face in building up a well-constructed story. This skill is not easily acquired, as their comments show. Barry describes one 'disastrous' story:

"All the wrong parts stuck together, e.g. the dustbin flying over there and the bit at the end should have been at the beginning. It was a disaster. It only happened once. I took some parts off other stories. It's usually a good story. Where I stuck the wrong parts together I could write it out again".

Joanne explains what she means by a 'blank' story, which is her word for one which was not successful:

"At home I tried writing my own adventure story, 'The adventure of Joanne and Joanna'. I tried writing it but it was a bit too blank. It couldn't really happen. Joanne was going to die so I had to take her to the doctor. The adventure started too soon and I kept forgetting about the dog and it fell to pieces and wasn't good ... I should have had a midnight feast and more story before the story starts. I should have had more at the beginning and not such blank bits like 'Joanne was going to die' and 'Joanne's eyes were closed' but more describing. I was carrying her in one arm, going up these steep cliffs with the dog and a package on my back and I don't think that would have been possible. There were lots of rocks and cliffs and suddenly we sat on this stone and we fell through it. There should have been more adventure. It was too blank, too straightforward".

As well as structure, Joanne is concerned with the credibility or authenticity of her story. Kelly, aged ten, makes a similar point when she explains how she would have improved her story about Father Christmas:

"We had to do one about someone who didn't believe in Father Christmas. He went somewhere and it taught him a lesson. I didn't explain it much. I should have explained about how he felt about not believing in Father Christmas and saying why not".

Nigel, aged nine, dissatisfied with his Robin Hood story, says:

"I would change the bit where he had wood and bark for clothes. He tried to make bark shoes. They looked good, If he threw them away animal skin might not be so good. With skins you can't take a pin through them but in bark you can take a pin and make a hole through it".

Daniel, aged eleven, describes a story written the previous year:

"I did one in Mrs Masterson's about a pirate. It didn't seem right. It started off when he gathered up some friends to go on a ship and then they got to the place and they were looking for treasure, but they couldn't find it. Three died and the other three carried on looking. They were sure there was treasure there. They came back with nothing. There was no treasure. The middle bit was bad where they started looking for the treasure. I should have made none of them die and made some of them find the treasure".

Daniel H., aged ten, is moving towards the idea that stories can be changed by discussing them with other people. An absolute rejection of a story is not always necessary. He compares his mind to a computer:

"It's like a computer. If you jog your memory it comes on one side and you can talk about it straight on. It's all there but you need something to jog it. To improve it I rub everything out except the bits when my brain was turned on, then think up loads of ideas and write them story fashion. Authors re-read stories and often give them to another person to read and then change the bad bits".

Duncan, aged ten, sees how he could alter the whole course of his story which failed, in his view, because his hero tried to drag a submarine up from the bottom of the sea using an ordinary ship:

"It would sink (the ship). The man should have dived in with him, gone down and looked at the submarine and gone away to get more people, got a crane, hooked it to the submarine, opened it and found skeletons inside. They could clean it out, get it working, paint it red and use it".

Similarly, Pippa sees how she can keep the same 'base' and still improve the story by changing the bits which she does not like:

"Under the Sea was boring because after diving into the sea I didn't know what to do next. There was a treasure chest but it only had old clothes in it. I dived up and swam round. To improve it, I'd have had no treasure chest, just treasure. I wouldn't dive, just fall off the boat. I'd keep the same base".

In conclusion, what these results confirm is the growing concern which children have for two aspects of story-writing - the use of descriptive words for effective characterisation and setting of scenes, and the importance of structure in expressing events of a narrative. The aim seems to be to convey the excitement of adventures and interesting happenings. The skill of achieving this aim seems to be one that grows with age and with increasing self-awareness.

The extent to which the children's comments parallel their actual stories is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

THE STRUCTURE OF CHILDREN'S STORIES

Introduction

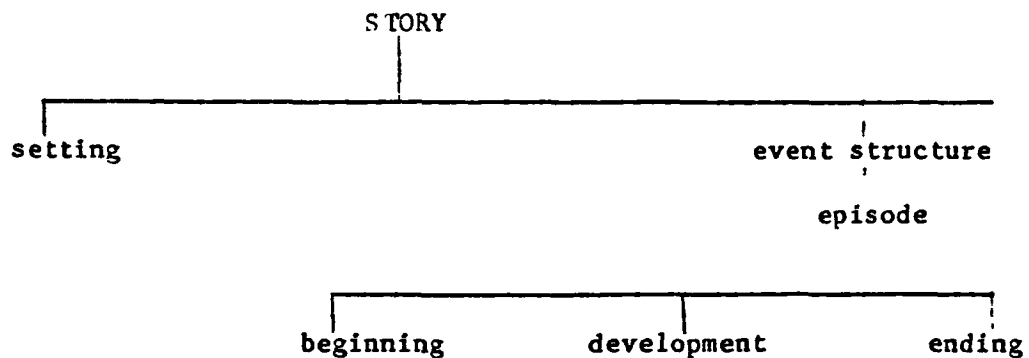
In this chapter, I propose to look at the structures which appear in the stories written by the children. I analyse the Flight stories using the story grammar method of analysis pioneered by Mandler and Johnson. As indicated in Chapter 3, much of the research using story grammars has focused on the individual's capacity to remember stories; the conclusions have been concerned with the reader's concept of story - a set of internalised expectations about the structure of a story which helps the comprehension and remembering of narratives. Research which has applied the story method to stories composed by children indicates that many young writers too have a basic sense of story in that they create characters, set a scene, devise adventures and work towards a conclusion or climax. (Gundlach, 1981; King and Rentel, 1981; Kroll and Anson, 1984; Stein and Glenn, 1979; Temple, Nathan and Burvis, 1982). At the same time, there are often serious omissions in stories by young children, the structure may be difficult to understand, motives may not be explained and the ending may be abrupt and inconclusive.

The story grammar method of Mandler and Johnson is useful for the analysis of children's stories because (1) it identifies an event structure based on the actions of the characters, their reactions, goals and goal-reaching attempts and (2) it enables the researcher to categorise overall structural patterns in the stories. By devising such a formal procedure for depicting diagrammatically how a story is structured, Mandler and Johnson have created a means of confirming intuitive impressions about the ways in which children organise their narratives. Even a first reading of the stories in the present study gives the impression that there are striking differences between the stories of the youngest and the

oldest children. Young writers seem to move from non-existent or abrupt endings through conventional endings (They all lived happily ever after) to rounded endings which are integrated into the rest of the story. The responses in the interviews too suggest a shift in the child's concept of a story from a series of episodes loosely strung together to a narrative where each event is embedded in an overall structure. Again, there seems to be a progression from very little elaboration of motives and feelings on the part of the characters to an explicit analysis of intentions and emotional reactions to events.

As shown in Chapter 2, Mandler and Johnson, (1977) argue that even the simplest story has four parts - a setting, a beginning, a development and an ending - which can be represented diagrammatically . (Figure 5)

Figure 5 Mandler and Johnson- Story Grammar



In other words, they argue that there must be at least one character who is normally introduced in the setting ; then there follows an episode in which something happens, (the beginning), the character acts or reacts as a result, (the development) and this brings about an event which ends the episode (the ending).

The development section of the episode can be of two types:

- 1) a simple reaction to the beginning on the part of the character:

this may be an emotional state ("I was scared") which then causes
 ~ an action ("so I ran away").

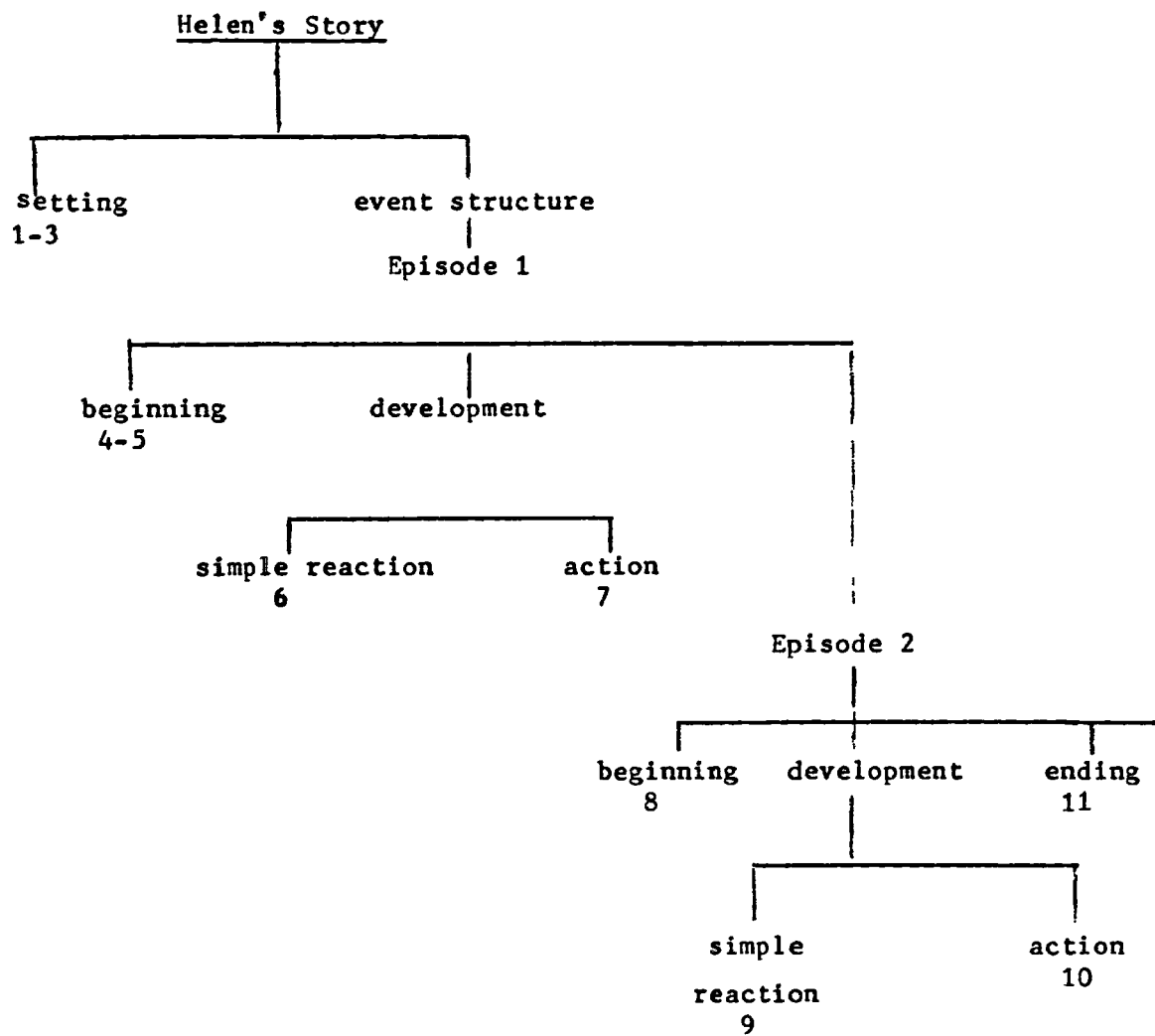
- 2) a complex reaction in which there appears a simple reaction ("They were scared") and a goal ("They decided to shoot their way out"), consisting of a goal path which contains an attempt ("they started to fire guns at the guards") and an outcome ("who then retreated to the woods").

Helen's story shows how the parts of the grammar operate. Following Mandler and Johnson, the story is first broken down into units of text which cover an event or psychological state. These units or statements then appear in the structural diagram.

Helen's story (aged 10)

- 1) Once upon a time there was a little goblin called Godalen
- 2) who went to Fairyland
- 3) which was his home
- 4) a dragon had stamped on his house
- 5) and on his neighbour's house (his name was Alfreded)
- 6) they were all very frightened
- 7) so they ran to the valley
- 8) they found a cave which had everything, a kitchen, bathroom and a lounge not forgetting a bedroom
- 9) It looked like the people who lived here thought the dragon would come here
- 10) Lets stay here until we die
- 11) And they did stay until they died

This simple story contains the story elements as defined by Mandler and Johnson. There is a setting (the goblin going back to Fairyland), Episode 1 (where the dragon stamps on the goblins' houses so that they run away) and Episode 2 (where the goblins find a cave in which to set up a new home) Their reactions result in action (their fear makes them run away; their speculation about why the comfortable

Figure 10

cave has been abandoned leads them to decide to stay). The ending is conventional ('They did stay until they died').

As the grammar diagram shows, the reactions of the characters to these devastating events are very brief (Units 6 and 9 show a simple reaction), and, while there are no actual omissions, the lack of plot structure and poor character development is easily identified.

In the present study it was decided to examine four aspects of the children's stories using the story grammar as a basis:

- (1) the setting
- (2) the development in the event structure
- (3) the ending
- (4) the overall structure

It was predicted that there would be developmental changes in all these four aspects. Each of the four aspects was coded according to a set of predetermined categories. 34 stories were rated independently by Dr. Isabel Finlayson, an educational psychologist experienced in data analysis of this kind; she was given no information about the ages of the children so the coding was done 'blind'.

(1) Setting

It was predicted that there would be age-related differences in the ways in which children began their stories.

The stories were coded on a three-point scale for setting: (Table 31)

Table 31Criteria for type of setting

<u>Category</u>	<u>Examples</u>
1. No setting of the scene/ the story begins in the middle	' I was just getting in the plane and I had to wait...'
2. A conventional beginning	'Once upon a time' 'Long, long ago in Fairyland...' 'It was a very long time ago'
The child appears to follow teacher's instructions without any elaboration	'If I were a bird...' 'If I could fly...' 'If I were on an aeroplane'
3. The scene is set	'It was a hot summer's day in Baghdad...' 'I am P.C.Hobman from the Metropolitan Police' 'The year is 2004 and my mum and dad and sister and I were going to America...'

Coding criteria are shown in the table with examples from each category - 1,2 and 3.

Inter-judge agreement was found to be 94.12% for settings.

Table 32 shows how children of different ages set the scene in their narratives.

Table 32Categorisation of setting in Class 1 - 4

	<u>Category</u>		
	1 No setting	2 Conventional beginning	3 The scene is set
Class 1	17	11	1
Class 2	13	8	6
Class 3	9	5	13
Class 4	4	-	26

The youngest children show the greatest tendency to have a Category 1 beginning; their stories really start in the middle with little concession to the reader's needs. Where they do make a formal beginning to the story, it is likely to be a conventional one or a phrase obviously provided by the teacher. If children in Class 1 and 8 children in Class 2 begin their stories with a phrase like 'Once upon a time', or 'Long ago'. Only one child in Class 1 could be said to give a proper setting to the story. This is Darren, who begins:

"When I went to the park I was flying my kite. It was me, Tom, James and my Mum".

6 Children in Class 2 set the scene. For example, Ian writes:

"A bird's first flight for a bird is difficult.."

before going on to describe a fledgling leaving the nest. But a large number still remain in Categories 1 and 2.

By Class 3, some children still plunge straight into the story or have a conventional beginning, but 13 take trouble to set the scene for the reader. Rupert, for example, gives time and place:

"Friday the 10th April 1981 I am sitting at the controls of the first returnable space rocket...."

Jonathan gives a brief resumé of the events which lead up to his exciting flight from an unpleasant situation:

"My mum had died, so had my dad. I was being looked after by a crooked old lady...."

However, these introductions, though they set the scene, are comparatively short and the writers still show a tendency to hurry through potentially interesting material. It is not until Class 4 that the children pay quite a lot of attention to the beginnings of their stories. 26 introduce the scene and while not all are very elaborate settings, many show a strong awareness of the need to explain to the uninformed reader the background to one's narrative. The settings tend to be longer and more detailed. Andrew, for example, takes four sentences to explain how he comes to be in a German prisoner-of-war camp:

"It all started like this. I came home from school and went upstairs to read a book about the war. It was called Warlord. When I sat down on the bed I began to think it was the war and the Nazis had cort me...."

Most younger children would have begun with the adventures themselves.

Similarly, Jon feels it is necessary to explain what his hero (a tetrapod) is like, where he is and what his crime is:

"Jargon Plage was a green slimy tetrapod in A block of the maxec security prison on the inter-galactically owned planet of Tetran. The cell he was in (cell 53) was dank and musty and the air was foul. The little bed that Jargon was sleeping restlessly on was plonium (a metal) and betra (a type of cloth). Jargon was serving a life sentence for the murder of a Pan-judge of the galactic court...."

It is only when he has set the scene that he feels ready to begin the story of Jargon's attempt to escape.

Joanne H. goes even further by providing a preface rather like the introductions which appear in magazine serials:

"Preface: Bob finds himself mixed up with a gang of ruffians. Jeb, the leader of the gang, persuades Bob and his chum Danny to go to a prison disco. They accept the invitation and Bob turns up with his girl-friend, Imogen. Bob takes Imogen home from the disco
 * * * * *

Then the events of the narrative begin.

As predicted, there appeared to be a strong trend from no setting or limited setting of the scene amongst the younger writers to a more elaborate explanation by the older children. which put the reader in the picture.

2. Development of episodes

The stories were coded on a three-point scale for ways in which the writers elaborated the development section of an episode through the psychological reactions of the characters to the events of a particular episode.

It was predicted that there are age-related differences in the ability of children to describe intentions of characters in their narratives.

Table 33 indicates the three different development categories as used in the present study to investigate the psychological reactions of characters to events in a particular episode - no reaction, simple reaction followed by action, and complex action leading to a goal or outcome - and illustrates each category with examples:

Inter-judge agreement in the coding of the stories was found to be 90.11%.

Table 33Three types of development in the event structure

...	<u>Category</u>	<u>Examples</u>
(1)	No reaction	<p>characters do not react at all to events, i.e., there is an omission of this part of the episode; characters react inappropriately. For example, in response to an attack by enemies they go to sleep.</p>
(2)	Simple reaction followed by action	<p>the character has an emotional reaction to an event ('I didn't want to make friends with him'), which results in an action ('so I ran off'); 'he was so frightened that he ran off backwards'. There is no elaboration, however,</p>
(3)	Complex reaction leading to a goal and an outcome	<p>This consists of a simple <u>simple reaction</u> and a <u>goal</u> appearing with a <u>goal path</u>. For example, the animals become angered by a hunter (simple reaction) so they plan to attack him (goal); they drive him over the cliff where he falls to his death (goal path). Some detailed information is given about the character's motivation or intentions.</p>

Table 34 shows how children of different ages write about characters' reactions to events in particular episodes of the narratives:

Table 34 Children's treatment of reactions in the development section of their stories.

	No reaction	Simple reaction	Complex reaction	N.
Class 1.	19	10	-	29
Class 2.	13	6	8	27
Class 3.	8	10	9	27
Class 4.	3	5	22	30

The youngest children (aged 7-8) show most likelihood of having no psychological reactions to the events of their story; 10 have simple reactions followed by actions. With age, there is a growing use of the complex reaction where characters have motives and intentions which act directly on the events in the narrative, but it is only the oldest group of children who produce predominantly more complex reactions which lead to the achievement of goals. This finding confirms the results reported in Chapter 6 where it was suggested that younger children are less likely than older children to express complex psychological states in their writing. The results also confirm the results of Kroll and Anson(1984) who found that among their sample of 9-year-olds there were more simple reactions than complex reactions leading to goal achievement. To them, "structural complexity tended to be related to the complexity of the motivations, reactions and goals of a story's characters. The deeper these qualities of characterisation become, the greater is the need to structure the story in a complex way"(p.169). Thus it was confirmed that there are age-related differences in the ability of children to describe intentions of characters in their narratives.

3. Endings

It was predicted that there would be age-related differences in the ways in which children end their stories.

The stories were coded on a three-point scale for endings as

Table 35 Criteria for coding endings

	<u>Category</u>	<u>Examples</u>
(1)	No ending:	the story simply stops
(2)	Conventional ending:	'they lived happily ever after' 'I woke up, it was only a dream' 'So they lived there until they died'
(3)	Rounded ending:	an ending which completes the story or brings it to a conclusion. 'Jamie had his first flight but never again. He was a home bunny' 'That was my first flight against a real enemy and I hated it' 'They could start life in a wonderful home surrounded by wonderful people. Who could want more?' 'Bob' still remembers Imogen as his dearest friend and he will always remember his frightening flight to freedom'.

Inter-judge agreement was found to be 88.24%

Table 36 shows how children of different ages end their stories:

Table 36 Types of endings in the stories

	<u>No Ending</u>	<u>Conventional Endings</u>	<u>Rounded Endings</u>	<u>N.</u>
Class 1	21	5	3	29
Class 2	10	7	10	27
Class 3	4	12	11	27
Class 4	2	8	20	30

It can be seen that in Classes 1 and 2 there is still a large proportion of children who do not think it necessary to round off a story.

Judy, aged 7, ends her story in the middle:

"..in the morning I would wake up and I would go and get something for my breakfast and I would go and get two worms"

The majority of children in Class 1 produced such an ending. A few write conventional endings. Joanne concludes:

"... then I would go back to my nest and eat it. Then I would go to sleep"

Stephen's (aged 8) story has a variation on the conventional ending which literally brings him down to earth from his fantasy of flight:

"...Mummy mummy I have seen wonder woman and I flew on my magic plane she said you must of dreamed it"

The conventional endings often focus on bed-time or eating. Even after a most exciting series of adventures in his hang glider Nigel (aged 8) concludes:

"He went home and put it in the garge and had brectfas"

In Class 1, one of the few rounded endings is given by Tom in his story of an eaglet being rescued from falling by its mother. In the process she has to drop the deer which she has been hunting. After the rescue, Tom, aged 7, concludes:

"... She would rather lose a deer than her son"

In Class 2, there is an increase in such rounded endings, although they are still in the minority. Adam, aged 9, after a description of a fierce fight in the air between British and Germans, concludes:

"That was my first flight against a real enemy and I hated it!"

More abruptly Gideon, aged 9, ends his rocket flight in this way:

"We land in the sea. I am free!"

Even for children in Class 3, however, there is still a reliance on the conventional ending though there is a decrease in the category of no endings. The conventional ending often provides a means of getting out of a difficult situation or simply ending the story as fast as possible. Typical endings from this class include:

"Thank goodness it was only a dream"

"I woke up and saw my teacher staring at me"

"But then I realised - it was a dream"

Rounded endings are in the same proportion as in Class 2 but they seem slightly more sophisticated. For example, James, aged 10, expresses the 'stiff upper lip' mentality of soldiers who carry out a daring rescue of passengers on a hi-jacked plane:

"We finally stopped and everyone couldnt thank them enough but all they said was, 'All part of the job'"

Daniel goes further by playing a trick on his reader. His hero gets tired of life as a burglar, becomes a train robber and makes an escape to Brazil where he lives in style. The whole story is told in the first person and it is only at the end that we are given the hero's identity:

"I was a passenger and there I stayed in brazil for as far as I was concerned for ever. I'm Ronald Biggs!"

For children in Class 4, the conventional ending or no ending is a much less frequent response, since there seems a greater concern to bring stories to an appropriate conclusion. Some end with a kind of moral: Joanne, aged 11, ends her adventure of the squirrels fleeing from a forest fire in this way:

"They could start life in a wonderful home surrounded by wonderful people, who could want more"

Samantha, after exploring the difficulties of living with a cruel aunt and uncle, has the children in her story re-united with their mother:

"She said smiling, 'I hope you don't run away from me!' Jenny and John smiled. How nice it was to have a real nice Mum"

Joanne H. gives a sort of epitaph for her dead heroine mourned by her boy friend:

"Bob still remembers Imogen as his dearest friend and he will always remember his frightening flight to freedom"

Finally, Mary-Anne gives a rounded version of the type of ending which focuses on going to bed. In her story, it is the appropriate culmination of a day-long quest by a herd of horses, led by Misty Blue, for a new place to live in safety:

"'My fellow members of our herd, we took flight from our homes and gratefully found this grazing spot' Misty Blue proclaimed 'And now we must have some rest and a good graze'"

As predicted then, there are age-related differences in the ways in which children end their stories.

4. Overall Structure

It was predicted that there would be age-related differences in the ways in which children structure their stories.

The stories were coded on a four-point scale for structure.

Since the present study investigates stories written by children of different ages, a major reason for making a structural analysis of the data was to see whether there were developmental patterns of organisation. Kroll and Anson (1984) distinguished three main structural patterns in the 25 stories written by 9-year-olds which they studied as part of the Bristol Longitudinal Language Development Programme (Wells, 1979) (see Chapter 3).

They identify one type of story which is linear in structure. Events appear one after the other without much causal connection, each episode stands by itself and the character's actions in one episode do not influence events in the next. The resulting diagram is horizontal. Nigel's (aged 8) story illustrates this type of linear story. There are six episodes in this story but few reactions on the part of the hero; each episode is separate and bears little causal relation to the other episodes. The sudden ending is a device for stopping rather than a conclusion:

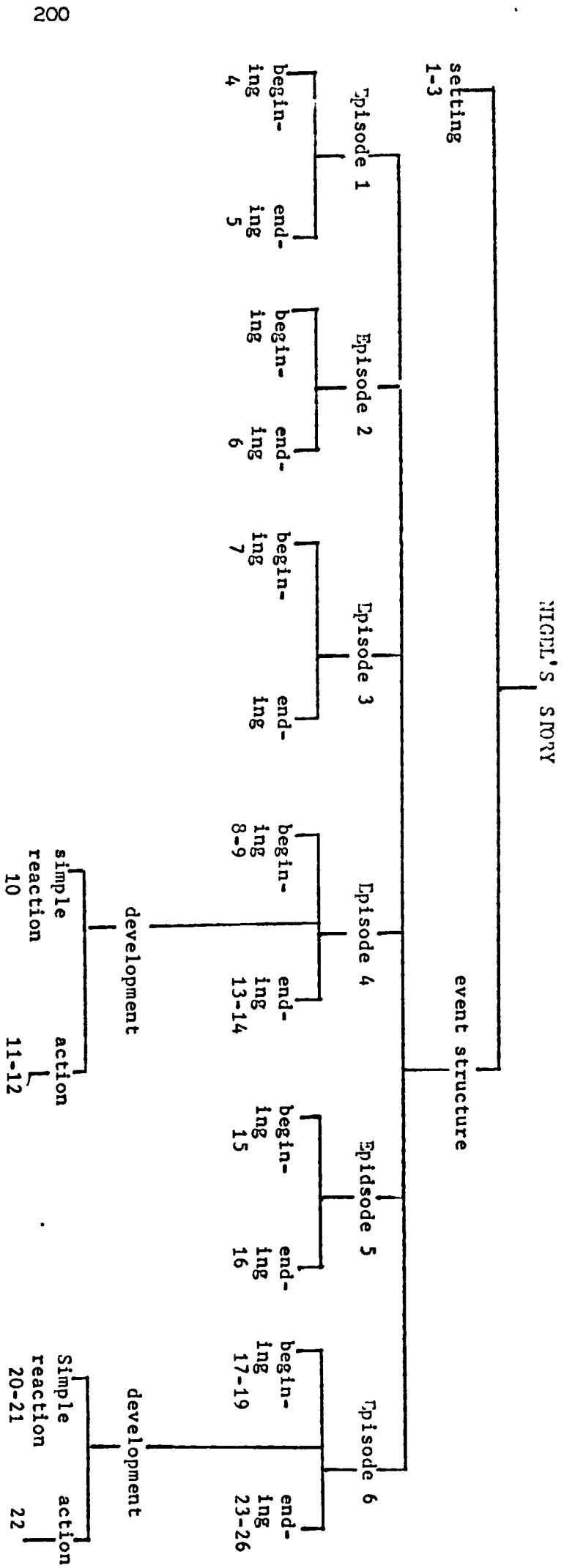


Figure 11

Nigel's Story (aged 8)

- 1) Once upon a time there lived a man
- 2) How was interesed in flingin (flying)
- 3) so he mad a big hang glider
- 4) the next day he tright(tried it) on a hill
- 5) the first time he landed in a tree
- 6) the second time he landed on the sand by the see
- 7) the third time he took of and went round the hill four times
- 8) the fifth time he went up in the are
- 9) And then he flow all the way home fast big ben
- 10) And someone waved to him
- 11) And he went throw the park and across the road
- 12) And he was back home in his own back garden
- 13) And he landed safely
- 14) Then he pote it in his garage
- 15) then he went indoors and made a cup of tea and a samwege
- 16) then he went to bed
- 17) And in the morning he got up and got drest
- 18) and went in his garage
- 19) and it was gone
- 20) then he ran indoors and picked up the phone and called the police
- 21) And the police said weve found it in church road
- 22) so he ran to church Road
- 23) and there it was
- 24) then he went home
- 25) and put it in the garge
- 26) and had brectfas

Nigel's story is typical of many written by children of his age. Events are linked together by the 'and then' device; the length of the story is affected by the sheer number of episodes. Nigel's story explores a common theme - a series of adventures which end happily but which are not explored in any depth.

In the second type of story, there is a relationship among events. For example, the actions of the hero will result in a further episode; the hero's powers of argument will persuade a fellow prisoner to collaborate in a plan which results in a daring escape from Colditz. In this type of narrative, the episodes are

embedded into one another rather than linked in a linear fashion.

The story by Daniel (aged 11) illustrates this:

- 1) 76777203 that was our call number Philip Powell and I
- 2) We had been shot down from a night raid over Germany
- 3) and were now on a castle atop a pinnacle of rock overlooking a valley
- 4) our cell was one of the old dungeons with rats scurrying over the floor
- 5) Every afternoon we were taken out for exercise in the woods
- 6) One day as we were walking near the wire over the top
- 7) I knew there were ledges where it would be possible to climb
- 8) When we were back inside
- 9) I conveyed the information to Philip
- 10) We decided next week to bust out
- 11) We made make shift picks
- 12) And arranged everything
- 13) Finally the day came
- 14) We neared the fence
- 15) When suddenly Philip shouted and pointed to the foot of the tree
- 16) Our guards rushed over with us just behind
- 17) I knocked mine out with a chop to the shoulder and an uppercut to the chin
- 18) Philip finished his
- 19) We rushed to the gap and squeezed through
- 20) then down as fast as we could
- 21) We had about half an hour before the alarm was sounded
- 22) We rushed down and hid under a suitable ledge and waited for dark
- 23) When dusk arrived we started off
- 24) Now search lights could spot us
- 25) Now we were almost free
- 26) By the time the main road was blocked we had run into the thick jungle like forest
- 27) Eventually we reached the Alps where we sneaked through to neutral Switzerland

The outcome of the attempted goal (the plan to escape) is a dramatic confrontation in which the two prisoners succeed in overcoming their guards. This leads directly to the next episode since the prisoners' action delays the sounding of the alarm. The story grammar also

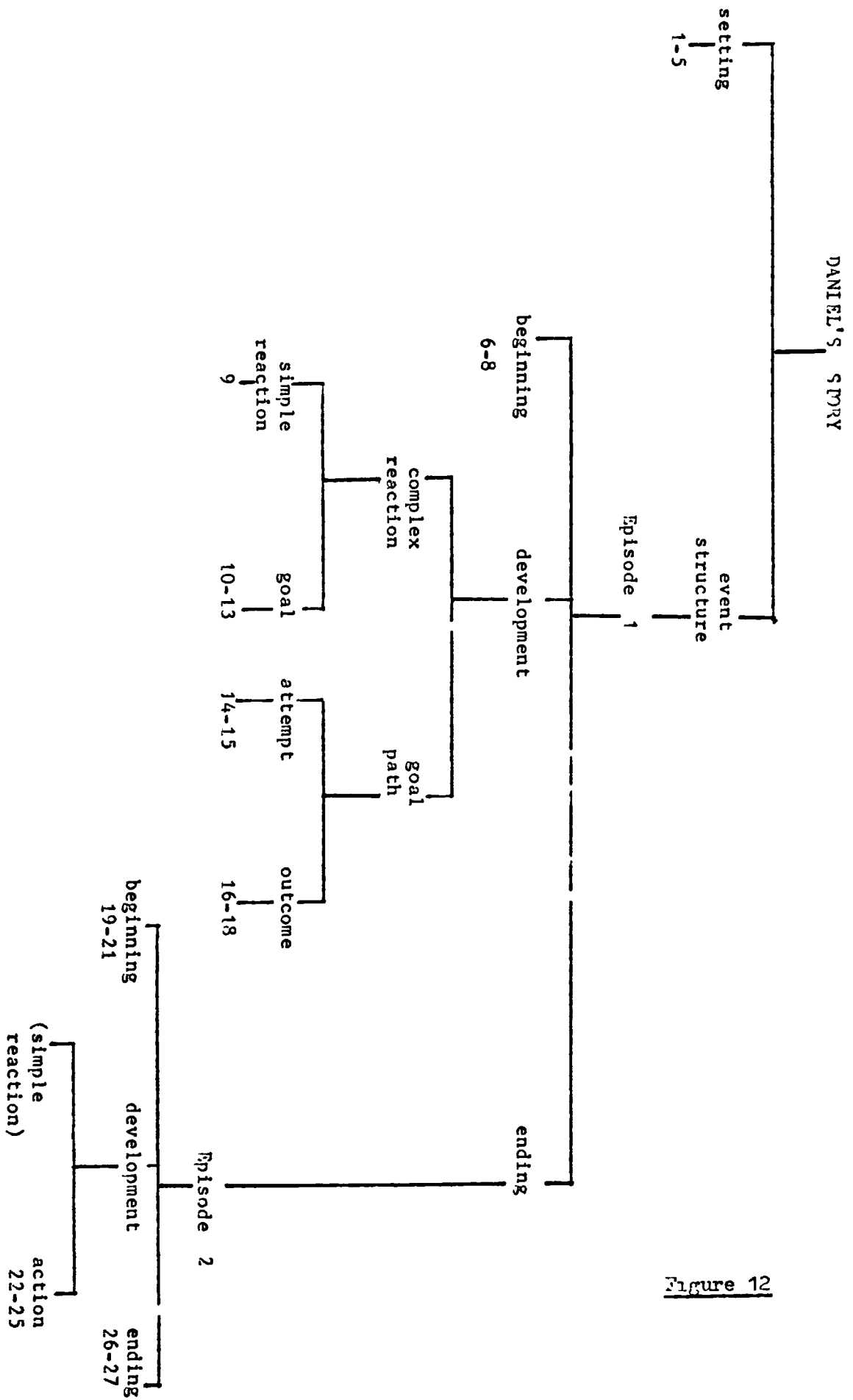


Figure 12

points out some of the flaws in the narrative. Episode 2 has much less detail than Episode 1; its lack of elaboration suggests pressure of time on the young writer. The truncated ending ("Eventually we reached the Alps") contrasts with the long, effective setting of the scene at the beginning ("76777203 that was our cell number", "a castle atop a pinnacle of rock", "the old dungeons with rats scurrying over the floor"). However, its embedded structure can be contrasted favourably with the linear structure of Nigel's story.

The third type of story combines both linear and embedded aspects. Most frequently, this type of story has episodes arranged in a linear manner some of which have further episodes embedded in them. Stephen's (age 9) story is an example of this pattern:

- 1) Once upon a time there was a toy plane
- 2) who belonged to a little boy
- 3) his name was John
- 4) One day John flew his plane
- 5) then it turned into a real plane
- 6) so he got on it
- 7) when he was in the sky
- 8) he saw tiny people
- 9) they looked like toys
- 10) and then he wanted to jump on the clouds
- 11) because they looked like cotton wool
- 12) then wonder woman came up in her invisible jet
- 13) She said what a nice vyew from up here
- 14) then John sais hullo you are sitting on the sky
- 15) No I'm not I am in my invisible jet said wonder woman
- 16) and he went homer
- 17) he said mummy mummy I have seen Wonder Woman
- 18) and I flew in my toy plane
- 19) You must of dreemd it she said

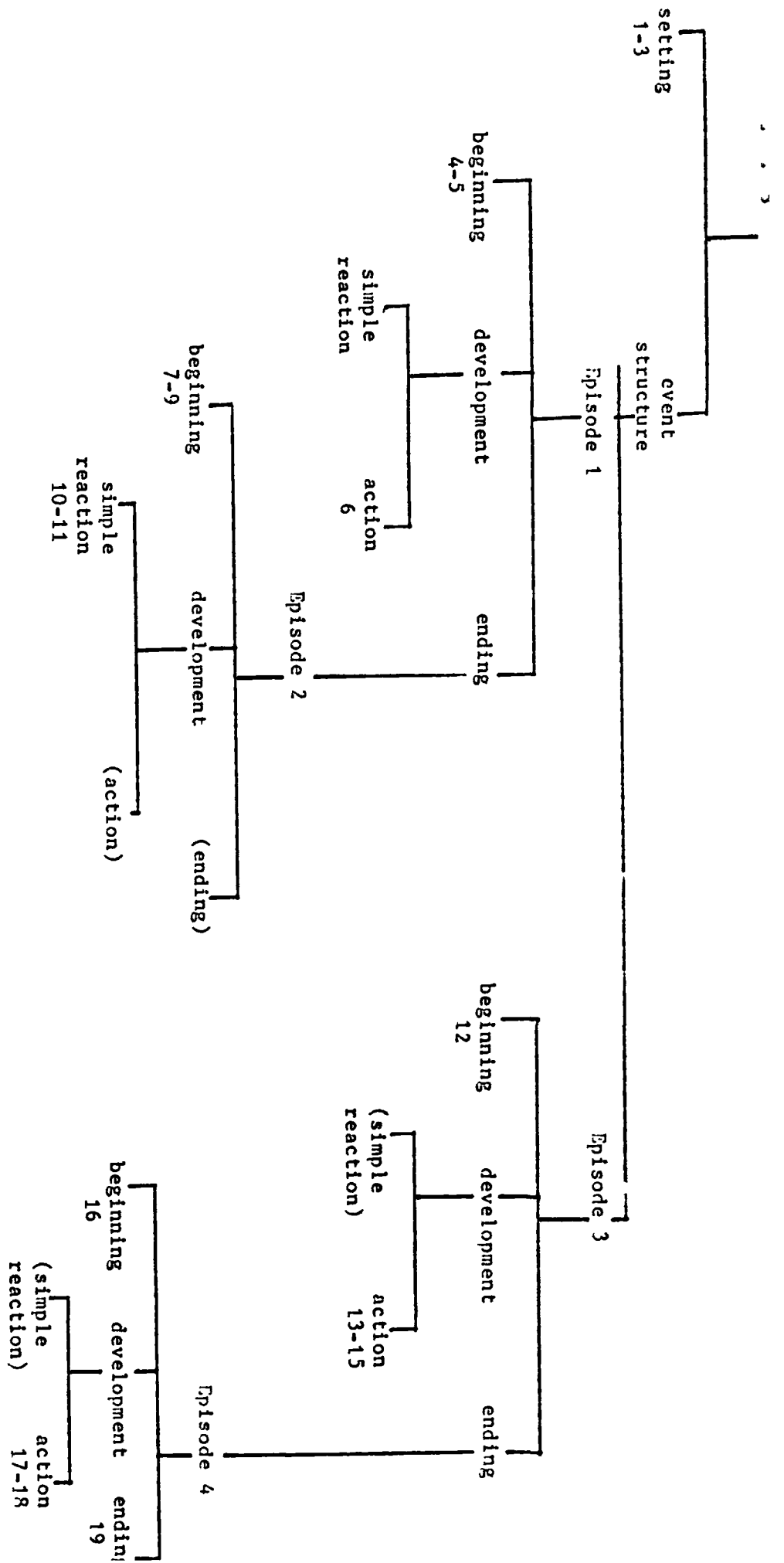


Figure 13

Episode 2, where the little boy looks down and sees toy-sized people is embedded in Episode 1 since it is a direct result of flying his toy plane. Episode 3, containing the conversation with Wonder Woman, is linked sequentially but not causally to Episodes 1 and 2. This type of story structure I have called Linear/Embedded.

In the present study a fourth category emerged which would not be defined as 'story' by Mandler and Johnson in the sense that the four criteria - setting, beginning, development and ending- were not all met. Here is a typical example by Bryony, aged 7:

Bryony's Story

"If I was a bird I would fly up in the air I would go to the country side and watch the farmer feed his horses and mow his field. And when it grew dark I would perch on a branch and go to sleep. And in the morning I would get up and I would go and perch on the window and watch the farmer's wife washing his and her clothes and then I would go and watch the farmer's wife milk the cows. Then I would go home again to have my babies I would get some hay and sticks and lay my eggs and sit on them and soon they will hatch"

While Kroll and Anson (1984) removed such pieces from their sample, I did include them in the analysis since the children all referred to them as stories and had written them in response to the teachers' invitation to write a story entitled Flight. Accordingly, I categorised this kind of story as Descriptive since it contained a series of episodes all linked in a sequential way. This kind of 'story' was most common among the 7-8 year olds and did not appear at all among the 10-11 year olds.

Inter-judge agreement was 89.34%.

Table 37 Criteria for Overall Structure

(1)	Descriptive	This is not strictly a story but a description of some state,e.g. being a bird or hang-gliding. -
(2)	Linear	This is a narrative. Events appear one after the other without much causal connection. Each episode stands by itself and the character's actions in one episode do not influence events in the next.
(3)	Linear/embedded	This type of story has episodes arranged in a linear manner some of which have further episodes embedded in them.
(4)	Embedded	There is a relationship among events and episodes are embedded with one another. For example, the actions of the hero will result in a further episode,e.g. his powers of argument persuade a fellow-prisoner to attempt an escape from Colditz.

The results were summarised in Table 38.

Table 38 Types of structure in children's stories

	Descriptive	Linear	Linear/ Embedded	Embedded	N
Class 1	17	9	3	-	29
Class 2	5	11	4	7	27
Class 3	3	11	4	9	27
Class 4	-	8	3	19	30

The results indicate an age-related trend in which children move from the linear stringing together of episodes (whether in descriptive pieces or in actual narrative) to stories in which episodes are causally related to one another and an overall coherence of structure is achieved. As predicted, as they get older, children use increasingly complex structures in their stories.

However, like Kroll and Anson (1984), I would be cautious in interpreting these results since a certain amount of intuition is almost inevitably involved in the actual categorisation of the stories, particularly where there are omissions and where the intentions of the protagonists have to be inferred by the reader. The independent judge reported some difficulty in coming to conclusions in this part of the analysis. However, the results in the present study can be compared with the sample of 9-year-olds studied by Kroll and Anson. They found that 10 of the 25 narratives in their sample were linear; 6 stories were linear/embedded; 9 were embedded. Kroll and Anson categorised a further 8 pieces as descriptive but did not include them in the analysis since they were not stories according to the criteria laid down by Mandler and Johnson. The Kroll and Anson results give support to the results in the present study.

The story grammar method, a reasonably objective method for analysing children's narrative structure, gives useful insights into the areas where children have difficulties in composition and could help teachers to guide children in their exploration of different ways in which a narrative might be tackled. The results in this chapter also confirm the children's own perceptions of the difficulties faced in constructing an effective narrative.

CHAPTER 9CONCLUSIONFindings in the present study.

In the present study , an attempt was made to make connections between the perspectives of a sample of young writers, and the content and structure of the stories which they wrote. The review of the literature on narrative writing had revealed the many facets of the process which may be explored and the difficulties which beset both objective and subjective analyses of writers and their products.

However, certain trends were revealed. The choice of contexts in the stories showed age differences, especially when the children were writing imaginative stories: the older the children were, the more likely was it that they chose a setting for the events of the narrative which was outside the familiar home environment. Some interesting patterns in boys' and girls' choice of settings also appeared. When writing about a real-life experience, in the story 'When I was Very Frightened', boys and girls showed no significant differences in their choice of setting. The fears of childhood - loneliness at night, separation from parents - seemed to be shared equally by boys and girls, although girls were slightly more likely to be afraid of being followed by a stranger or a gang.

However, in the writing of imaginary experiences, there were significant sex differences. Boys were much more adventurous than girls in their choice of setting and would travel further in their quest for excitement; girls were home-based or travelled away from familiar settings in the company of their parents.

Differences between boys and girls in their perceptions of male and female characters confirmed much of the psychological research into sex-role stereotyping. Boys had far fewer female than male characters in their stories; girls showed the reverse pattern but to a lesser extent since, although they preferred to write about female characters, they did include a slightly more representative number of male characters. Again, an examination of the behaviour of these characters indicated differential perceptions by boys and girls, with the girls viewing females as relatively more active than males and the boys portraying males as more active than females; this effect was more pronounced for the boys in this sample.

The main part of the study investigated the growth in social sensitivity as expressed in children's depiction of self or hero/heroine and others, their evocation of psychological and social environments through appropriate description, and their awareness of the reader's needs. The analysis of the stories did suggest an age-related sequence of development from literal, unemotional writing to writing which showed insight, empathy and an awareness of emotions in self and others. The social sensitivity scores were also positively correlated with the children's reading ages and with their scores on an attainment test in English.

The qualitative account of the children's own feelings about the narratives which they had created confirmed the developmental trend towards greater social and psychological understanding

of people, but it was only a minority of children who were able to articulate consciously that they used story-writing as a means of exploring personal and social issues in their own lives. More revealing was the expression of ideas on concepts of successful and unsuccessful story-writing. The interviews showed clear developmental trends. The younger children preferred quantities of exciting adventures with a minimum of description or characterisation; older children were more likely to reveal a concern for scene-setting, structuring, appropriate description and characterisation as criteria for effective narrative writing.

The story-grammar analysis of the narratives confirmed these trends. Settings, development of episodes, endings and overall structure all showed qualitative improvement with age. The stories moved from episodes loosely strung together, beginning and ending in a rather haphazard manner and containing little elaboration of character and events, to stories which had a much more coherent overall structure and inter-relatedness of episodes and characterisation.

The value of narrative writing for children

To what extent does the present study support the idea that imaginative activities, such as story-writing, have value for children's personal and intellectual development? The thesis began by asking why people engage at all in creative activities which have no obvious practical outcome.

In working and talking with the children of this study I observed a great deal of enthusiasm which arose spontaneously out of the writing tasks which had been set. Many of the young writers expressed satisfaction in narrative-writing and enjoyment in sharing their ideas

with others. It was clear that the stories were often about the writers themselves and their families and friends, whether expressed directly or indirectly, whether the characters were recognisable or disguised as fantasy figures. As I pointed out in the introductory chapters, there is a strong belief by many writers in the field of English teaching that children write as part of the search for self-knowledge and understanding of people and events in real life. If this were true, there would be nothing surprising in the value which young writers themselves attach to their stories since the outcomes would be of such personal importance for each one of them. Narrative-writing would be one of a number of 'spectator role' activities in which we all engage by distancing ourselves from significant events and experiences. Such a hypothesis is, in fact, very difficult to test empirically, especially with young children who do not tend to reflect introspectively on their own motives and feelings. This was shown quite clearly in the interviews where, for the most part, the children did not give any indication of consciously using their stories as a means of coming to know themselves and others more fully. Again, the sex-role stereotyping which was observed in the stories, especially on the part of the boys, indicated a reflection of the values to which children are exposed by parents, teachers and the mass media, rather than the imaginative reconstruction of experience through writing which English specialists have described. Yet the growing awareness of psychological aspects of characters in the narrative and the increase in sensitivity to the needs of the reader which was shown in the social sensitivity scores at each age-level seems to suggest that the children are indeed using the creation of

narratives as one means of increasing their understanding of social and emotional issues in their own lives. This is not to deny that such a process is taking place in other areas of development, but rather to argue that the medium of narrative creates an arena in which children can practise skills of interaction which are also being acquired in real-life relationships, and can experiment with happenings which are as yet outside their experience.

My own response to the stories, although not discussed at all in the thesis, may be of relevance here. These stories were produced in fairly controlled conditions, with a time limit and in the company of 30 others all engaged in the same task; they were often incomplete, inadequately structured, predictable in outcome and limited in characterisation. Yet I found that, in conjunction with the interviews the stories for me evoked each child in a way which factual writing would not. Great authors can move their readers through powerful use of language, sensitive development of character, subtle exploration of important issues and skilful structuring of events for suspense, drama or humour. Children do not have the talents of accomplished writers but in their way they are often trying to achieve similar ends, albeit on a much smaller scale. They too will often put much from their own experience into their writing; they can use stories as a medium for coming to terms with issues which are important to them, such as loneliness, fear, fluctuations in relationships, speculation about the future, thinking back to earlier years; they worry about the effectiveness of their language and the credibility of their characters; structure of plot, adequacy of beginnings and endings can preoccupy them too.

In the present study I found that reading a story and then talking about it with the writer gave me an entry point into that child's

character in a very short space of time, much as a therapist might use a life-history to understand a client. Many of the children seemed to have put something personal into the stories, however inadequately the end-product was expressed. To read the stories without talking to the authors would often mean missing some important intention on the part of the child. In the context of the school, the receptivity of the reader seemed to me to be a crucial element in the process of writing; response to the story and knowledge of the child interacted with the actual content of the narrative. In fact, an over-literary response to the stories could actually blind the reader to their importance for the child; the excitement and adventurousness of stories, obvious as the plots might seem to the sophisticated adult reader, were often the very aspects which appealed to the young authors (and to young readers as well).

Chapter 2 traces developmental patterns in the growth and function of children's imagination and explores the possibility of links among a number of imaginative activities. For example, why do children engage in fantasy or socio-dramatic play? What motivates children to tell and act out stories? Is there a progression from the make-believe world of the pre-school child to narrative-writing in the primary school? Are there factors within fantasy play, role-enactment and drawing which relate to the development of narrative competence?

The literature on fantasy play in particular certainly seems to parallel observations of children's narrative writing. For example, play episodes are often rich in symbolic activity, such as transformation of self and others into characters, recreation of familiar events into unfamiliar settings, acting out of roles.

Furthermore, play involves complex cognitive activity, such as acting out a sequence of ideas in a coherent manner, or structuring events into episodes which move to a resolution or at least round off the narrative. Fantasy play also involves social interaction and co-operation among the participants; in some cases children seem flexible in adapting roles to take into account the thoughts and feelings of the characters and in fitting in with the themes which are being explored. Finally, children who are involved in fantasy play frequently display persistence, interest and enthusiasm for the enactment of themes based on real-life experiences or imaginary scenes. Much of present-day writing about play and, to a lesser extent, drawing (as discussed in Chapter 2) emphasises the social, emotional and cognitive benefits which the children gain from taking part in fantasy activity. In fact, the literature indicates that the impetus for developing narrative competence begins early in the pre-school years, whether through telling stories, describing the events of the day, drawing or enacting scenes with the help of props.

Like story-writers, children engaged in such play are concerned with roles, characters and events; their sources are real-life happenings, familiar people, imaginary characters from literature and television, or stock events, like escaping from an enemy; they too develop competence in structuring the episodes through practice and co-operation with others; the development of skill in structuring play episodes also emerges with practice and age.

All of these facets of fantasy play processes seem remarkably similar to the aspects of story-writing which are described in the present study. What seems to happen is that once the child enters school, teachers discourage spontaneous fantasy play and emphasise instead

the development of narrative competence in writing. The children, of course, in their spare time continue to play and, as some of the interviews indicated, draw on themes from socio-dramatic play for the content of their written stories. Similarly, research into play indicates the important role which adults have in 'scaffolding' the narrative thread of play episodes. With reference to story-writing teachers guide its development and the interaction between child and teacher strongly influences the direction which the child's narrative competence will take. This relates particularly to the children's concern with structural aspects of their stories, much of which seemed to reflect the teacher's comments concerning appropriate use of words and effectiveness of endings, for example. While it cannot be claimed that the present study pinpointed precisely what the links between fantasy play and narrative writing are, the description of the various aspects which are examined - themes, contexts, and characters, the growth of social sensitivity, the children's concepts of story, the growth in structuring abilities - all parallel the earlier developmental trends in children's play behaviour. More work clearly needs to be done in this area.

Relevance to the teacher

Are there patterns in a child's writing development which would give the teacher insights into the child's emotional and cognitive development? The results of the present study confirmed the idea of trends in the growth of writing abilities. Social sensitivity seems to increase with age, especially in the understanding of self, in acquiring awareness of motivational and emotional needs in others, in understanding that the reader's perspective has to be taken account of, and in knowing that the good writer must

supply details about the context in which a story is set and use aspects of the environment to heighten the emotional impact. These sensitivities seem to follow a developmental pattern and parallel the shift from egocentrism in other areas. From another angle, clear developmental trends can be observed in the ways in which children structure their narratives. This can be shown in the growing sophistication of beginnings and endings in the stories. Furthermore, the overall structure of the story seems to move from a predominantly linear structure among seven-year-olds to a more inter-related structure among eleven-year-olds, whose episodes are embedded within an overall theme. Parallel to this runs an increasing awareness with age for the need for structure in stories if effective writing is to be achieved.

Knowledge of these trends, it seems to me, can be invaluable to teachers since it gives them a psychological framework within which to evaluate the work of their pupils. In other words, this approach takes into account the meaning which the child is expressing; it takes seriously the adventures, social interactions and characters which the child has devised. This perspective can give rich insights into the growing awareness of personality, character development and person perception through a medium which, for the most part, children find interesting and natural.

The analysis of structure in stories gives insights into children's concepts of story and the growing complexity with which they view writing. This type of analysis, coupled with accounts by the children of what they are actually planning when they think up a story, can give a useful measure of children's growing concern for coherence and logical consistency within a narrative.

Furthermore, the present study indicated that writing flourished in a context where children trust one another and the teacher. It seems to be important for children to feel secure in the knowledge that what they write will be received in a sensitive way. I would suggest that teachers could foster this kind of environment by encouraging more talk among the children about their own writing processes. Awareness of other people and sensitivity to the reader can be increased, it is suggested, through collaborative learning activities. For example, a range of drama activities could extend the children's social role-taking skills, much as direct intervention by nursery school teachers can improve the quality and imaginativeness of children's fantasy play. Dialogue is one useful way of developing the capacity to differentiate among characters in a narrative. Again, this ability can be improved through the use of tape-recordings or of class readings of stories. Children from an early age spontaneously adopt a story voice and it is only one step further to extend this into dialogues between characters in narratives with the added psychological insight which this can give to the episodes in the narrative. Again, skilful and sensitive questioning by teachers can help children to develop psychological insights into their characters' behaviour and feelings.

As Graves advocates in his work on the conference, the teacher must avoid probing intrusively, must keep the story firmly within the control of the child, and yet must make it clear to the child that changes are possible. Again, it seems that it could be very beneficial for children to discuss problems of story structure with one another and with the teacher while in the planning stage. The present study indicates that children, especially as they get

older, show interest in structure as well as dissatisfaction with their own skills in this area.

It would seem then that this is an aspect of teaching in which a great deal of productive work could be done in schools. Lessons could from time to time be centred round the theme of structure as a means of enhancing content. Children could discuss the effectiveness of a range of introductory paragraphs. Beginnings and endings of favourite books could be examined and used as models. The value or otherwise of stock techniques like 'Once upon a time', or 'and they all lived happily ever after' could be explored.

The fact that the children in the present study were so willing to talk about structural aspects of their writing indicates that a technical approach to writing skills need not inhibit the imaginativeness of what the children are trying to convey. In fact, like craftsmen, children, it seems to me, would relish some practice in technique, as long as it did not become too intrusive. Such an approach would improve not only their writing ability but would also help them to read with greater perceptiveness. Again, this approach could lead teachers to avoid comments like, 'Not one of your best stories'. More constructive would be, 'Have you thought of a way of ending your story which would bring out the excitement?' or 'Tell me some more about the ending. What really happens to the hero?'. Methods of holding tension and excitement could be explored; individual difficulties and successes shared and sources of writing blocks brought into the open.

With regard to the overall structure of stories, the teacher would still have to be sensitive in handling this topic. Younger children

seem to prefer stories which consist of 'lots and lots of adventures' and this treatment of episodes can give them useful practice in writing and enjoyment in simply exploring a number of events in brief. It is here that the conference could be of value. The teacher could focus on one adventure and ask for further elaboration. As long as as the child was not being asked to do something which was actually beyond his or her capacities at that developmental stage, then this could be of value. In fact, when the younger children discussed stories with which they were not satisfied, a common response was that they were 'boring'; further elaboration was difficult to elicit.

The analysis of structure gives both teacher and child the opportunity to focus on a practical aspect of the writing process. Here ideally educational research and class-room practice should interact, with the shared expertise being of mutual benefit. It must be stressed, of course, that this type of constructive criticism has to be done within a trusting relationship between teacher and child. Just as children find writing stories an enjoyable activity which they can use to explore ideas and discover more about other people, so teachers can find that their partnership with the children in exploring aspects of narratives - whether psychological or structural - can enhance their own enjoyment of the creative activity. The teacher's involvement and interest in the content of the stories and the ways in which the children express it can each be powerful influences on the writing which the children produce and the confidence with which they express their ideas.

It is suggested that this approach to the evaluation of children's stories serves a dual purpose. It gives the teacher fairly clear guidelines about the child's developmental level of perceptiveness

about character, audience awareness, self-understanding and ability to structure a narrative. This knowledge can be used to make objective measures of the child's writing ability. However, the evaluation can also be used as part of the teaching process as the teacher feeds back into the writing context information and ideas about what the evaluation has revealed. The evaluation can then be used as a means of extending the child's abilities and opening up a range of skills through careful questioning and guidance.

Further research

I would like to end by suggesting further research which could be carried out in this area. In this study, I tried to use measures of the end-product - the pieces of writing - in conjunction with the subjective accounts of their own writing experiences by the children. There were certain drawbacks which I encountered as I carried out the research. Firstly, I often had to interview the children some time after the stories had been written, simply because there were 113 interviews to carry out. Thus, the story was not particularly fresh in their minds. It would have been more useful to interview the children soon after the writing or even, like Tmig, during the writing process. Secondly, I assumed that the children would be able to talk about the use which they made of the writing process for their own personal development. Although the increase in social sensitivity was clearly demonstrated by the objective analysis of the stories, it was not so apparent from the interviews. If I were to carry out further research in this area, I would adopt a different strategy. I would try an intervention approach by taking two classes of the same age and from a similar

background, preferably parallel classes in the same school, would test all children initially using an objective measure of social sensitivity and structural organisation, and would then work with the children of one of the classes for a period of, say, three months. Activities would include role play, drama, many discussions about endings and beginnings, and sharing of stories among the class. At the end of the experimental period, the two classes would be tested in the same way by setting the same topic to all the children. The prediction would be that the children in the experimental group would show greater perceptiveness of psychological aspects of character and would be more skilled in structuring story. An alternative experiment would be to try to relate social sensitivity as measured in story writing to social skills in real-life interaction with peers and adults as noted through observation of children in social situations.

Conclusion

Like the children, I too find endings difficult. Unlike them, I cannot simply write, 'Then I woke up and it was only a dream!' Instead I will simply say that this study of children's story-writing has enhanced my understanding of how children think and feel. It has also given me insights into the teaching process and the sensitivity with which personal writing has to be received.

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APPENDIX 1INTERVIEW

I am doing a study of children's writing - why they write, when they write best, the conditions in which they write best, the people for whom they like to write, and the kinds of writing which they like best. I'd be happy if you could answer a few questions about the stories which you write.

Which do you prefer, Flight or When I was very Frightened ? Why? Where did the ideas for the two stories come from?

- 1 a) Do you enjoy writing?
- b) What do you think makes a good story?
- c) Are you a writer?
- d) What do you need to write a good story?
- 2 Where do you write best, at home or at school? Why?
Is there any difference between the two?
- 3 Do you ever do any writing just for yourself that you don't show to anyone?
- 4 a) Tell me about one of your stories which you thought was very good. Why did you like it?
- b) Tell me about a story which you did not like so much. Why were you not pleased with it? How could you have improved it?
- 5 Is there anything else which you would like to tell me about your writing?

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APPENDIX 2

25th March, 1981.

As you probably know, since the autumn term I have been carrying out a study of children's writing processes. With the help of Mr. Keeble I have interviewed children in Class 7 and collected examples of the stories which they have written this year.

I would like to complement this observation of one particular class with a study of the stories which children write at different ages. One way to do this would be to take samples of existing class work, but the difficulty of this approach is that direct comparisons are impossible when the writing topics vary. For this reason, I would appreciate it very much if the same titles could be given to children in different age-groups, and I am writing to ask if you could help me to do this. Since I am looking at the ways in which children's sense of audience influences the kinds of writing which they do, I think that it would be best if these titles could be given by you as part of normal class-room activity so that the children could write as they usually do for you as trusted adult audience.

I enclose two story topics and would be very grateful if you could give them to your class during two separate creative writing classes either by the end of this term or early next term. I could photocopy the scripts and return them to you quickly if you wished. I will, of course, let you know what my findings are and would also be interested in recording some of the children's comments on their own writing. I look forward to talking to you about this.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Cowie



APPENDIX 3TITLE 1When I was very frightened

I have chosen a theme which draws directly on the child's own experience particularly where strong feelings were aroused. I would encourage the children to talk about an experience which had been upsetting or disturbing at the time, to try to remember it as clearly as they could and then to describe it in their own words in such a way that the reader could share the writer's emotions.

TITLE 2The Flight

Here I have chosen a theme which could be interpreted by the children in a number of ways. They could write about flying or about running away. They could draw on their own experience or they could move into the world of fantasy. The characters in the story could be real or imaginary; they could be human or animal. After a discussion of the possibilities of this title I would leave the children free to choose the one which appeals to them most.